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Nevaeh

Book: 70

Incest

1

Past Angels- Silverstone, and interbreeding.

The redhead pin-up- is hanging

on the call walls, and the door rushes openly.

We walk… and I am in chains.

Boom, boom!

SMACK!

The lights get bright, in a new room.

~*~

Titus Back- sit- do you feel that you have done your time?

Yes- I can say I will not hurt anyone… ‘Rejected!’

Shit- I am up for it… to say his friend outside- yes it sucks 10 years! Said Titus Back.

I will never see the outside… nothing more than this wall. Um him- the other man in orange said. Outside the bungalow after crossing the covered bridge to his place-the bungalow, remote in a sylvan area, the lovers' cries dropping in and out into the nightfall. I was sitting in my early for thinking of just scaring them- blots everywhere as I go out of the car- whiskey in my hand- yet I

was still thinking of what if… my wife- the slut- was with him.

I see them drunk and giggling, horny as hell- going at it- I knew. No sooner is the door shut when they are all over each other, ripping at clothes, pawing at flesh, mouths locked together. He gropes for her down under, tries to turn her on so much with the rubbing of his hand to make it wet, playing and jiggling the hell out of it. He had more urgent things to do, like getting the blouse on top of her pink dress open, she was not wearing a bra, and her hands on her boobs and showing vagina. He enters her without delay up against the wall. He

slams her against the wall, ripping her skirt completely off- he takes her pounding the wall- rolling down to the floor. We hear fabric tear.

She cries out Yes- un- F*CK me hard- hard, hitting her head against the wall but not caring, as he lifts and drops her hard on his man-ness- crushing her against him fixed, clawing his back from her young loving lust, shivering hard to the over and over endings, with the feelings running through her- like his hand in her long dark hair.

He carries her across the room with her legs wrapped around him, they just freak! They fall onto the bed jumping

not stopping for the paints to come off him. She arches, moaning, He can hear them freaking from here. He raises a bottle of the shin and knocks it back. The radio plays softly with the door open to the car, painfully romantic, taunting him: I will always love you- He opens the glove compartment and pulls out the gun… wrapped in her underwire.

That pares he keeps with him- freaked her when she was 14 under an angel oak tree. He lays it in his lap and unwraps it carefully a revealing a .38. Greasy, murky, black in color, and ever so evil feeling in his hot hands. fumbling with his fly- he jacks it- saying this is it…

as well as we drove down a wooded path some now in the car- I got back in I- could not- I could not do that to them, the sounds of rutting passion growing fainter as I walked back- I was sickened by it- yet let her go, circulating now with the night sounds of crickets and hoot owls... and the thump of the motor turning over-and the music soft it was our song on the radio… play as the tears ran. Titus Back- There's a nigger- like me in every state prison in America, I guess like I am the one that can get what you need… alcohol if that is your thing- crack it you sniff- and drugs if you a dumb-ass- yet I am Five and Ten- I got it all you will either love or hate. A 1938 Ford one out of many cars

for this high roller- a toothbrush- or something to hide to sick or dig with. Parked in a clearing, even if it was the year 1994. It was too clear I had this car… and the drive… but I had to see it myself. With my own eyes… that is when you get to see me for the first time- Bradley Delgado, 19 slicked back hair- good looking she said, three-piece suit, a hotshot- baseness man. Under normal situations a well-thought-of, solid citizen; barely hazardous, even pussy to some. But these conditions are far from customary. He is unkempt, yet stuffy, and very- very smashed- high on something too. A pipe smoldering in his mouth. His eyes bright blue- yet stoned and itchy,

flighty, and hard, are engrossed to the small house up the path- he was.

He grabs a box of bullets and chin smocks feeling he is seeing a movie of his wife doing a scene he should be in. Spills them everywhere as he loads the gun for his head- or there- he was not sure yet, all over the seats and floor- this ran down. lovers' moans. He takes another shot of bourbon courage, then- clumsy is his hands fiddling with it. He picks bullets off his lap and zips it up, loading them into the gun, even thinking about blowing his dick off for not getting it in this woman tonight of ever after now- he was in love with her… only… so much

so he wants her dead… one by one, systematic, and grim. 6 in the chamber- not 8. He just stands and listens, overwhelmed/confused. He does not look like much of an assassin now with the look in his glass eyes- that have the glimmer of the streetlight in them; he was the only one where- he thought the man on a dirt path in the woods, tears streaming down his face, a loaded gun held loosely at his side- he was going to end them and him in one go around. A pitiful character- at this point, not this man at all. He starts up the path, unsteady on his feet. The closer he gets, the louder the lovemaking becomes. Louder and more hyperactive. The lovers

are reaching a climax, their sounds of passion degenerating into rhythmic gasps and grunts. Oh god um- ah ...oh- YES- YES- Bradley lurches to a stop, pay attention. We hear languorous laughter, moans of satisfaction. Oh god...that's so-o good...you are the young hot girl who cries out in orgasms after orgasms. His gaze and goes back to the cottage- looking in a love pouring out of her. Bang- Bang- Bang- Bang- Bang- and 3 more. I ran- not sure what I had done- was confused high and drunk. He shuts off the radio not able to handle it. With Unexpected quietness, except for the distance of feeling, I did this to my love- and her freak- opens the door and steps

from the car- saying- FREAK YOU BITCH. The one next does not even, I said so. Its night started- out. His patent leather shoes crunch on gravel, and he rolls steps- in a sexy way.

Loose bullets stun and toss onto the dirt. The shin jar drops and cracking glass in fragments unstop of the undies and the evidence. Framing me here… Stone Cassel- from the 1700's old where they still hang you if they feel the need to. Bradley Delgado came to me in EBENSBURG in 1994- for blasting and busting over the girl he was banging. The sound slams into his brain are numbing to the pounding he is hearing. He shuts his

eyes tightly, wishing the sound would stop. It finally does, dying away like a distress signal until all that is left is the shallow wheezing and puffing of post-coitus. The best... the best I ever had... the girl said… as he was looking from the car… (cut) In the COURTROOM the day of freedom ends and I am on the stand, at the courthouse. A large oval courtroom- the wind blows and the windows rattle and whistle- hauntingly. THE 12 JURY listens to the man stammering about- like a gallery of dummies on exhibition, pale-faced I am and cold to them- some would call me chilling. Bradley Delgado is on the witness stand, hands folded, suit and tie pressed, hair meticulously combed- oiled.

Non-sympathetic when I did not do it! District attorney Mr. Frampton describes the hostility you had with your wife the night she was murdered was that of a nut job -quoting. He expresses in soft ways kind to the learner, dignified tones: Bradley how would you say it went- It was very acrimonious. She said she was glad I knew about the a-fire, that she loathed all the sneaking around. That she just wanted to hurt me- She said she wanted a divorce here in this town D.A. - What was your answer? I articulated I would not grant a reply to something I had no say in. D.A. - He speaks to his notes- flipping through the loss pages. I will see you in Hell before I see you with that blanking

man. Those were the words you used, Mr. Delgado, rendering to the testaments of your fellow citizen in your parts of town. I said- If you and they say so-

o. I do not remember I was not at the right wits at the time. I was upset- confused- drunk and high. D.A. - What transpired after you and your wife disputed? Okay- She packed a handbag and went to be with Mr. Orillie. D.A. - Homer Orillie. The billionaire that owns the Odalis Hills Country Strip Club, half the town, and part of the Ebensburg railroad. The gentleman you had lately shared was her lover and sex partner- would you say, lovers.

No- I would not- what would you say it was- I cannot say that word in the courtroom. Yet you get it NO? Is that what you want to hear? Do not be smart with me- the D.A said. I nod slightly- Did you follow her? Yes- I saw them at the bar I was already intoxicated- as they were also- Yes- I decided to drive to Mr. Orillie's summer household and threaten them. They were in the home getting unclothed, so I parked my car in the round drive out... and waited for her to well I thought to come out. D.A. With what purpose? I am not certain. I was confused. Drunk. I craved to frighten them. D.A. You had a gun with you? Yes- I had it- but I am not sure what I did with

it… I am not sure. I was muddled. Stoned. Mostly I wanted to scare them. So, I would say- Yes. I did- I must've… how do you not remember killing your wife and love- he asks- with prissiness.

D.A. When they arrived, you went into the house and blasted their heads with lead? No- I think I have been clear here, that- I did not- and went back into my car to weigh them out. I was sobering some after they looked in on them- and the long walk back to the car. I apprehended she was not worth it- yet I would love her always. IS THAT SO- SO MUCH SO TO GIVE AN EXECUTION? No- I said that not it at all… that I would let it

go… what do you mean by that- the 5th I said. NO comment! guilty! He shouted in my face the spit ran down my face! D.A. Quickie- style it was while there were in doggie style- something that called for a divorce indeed. Not something a married couple does- That was the testament- that the others said to happen over the way- A .38 caliber divorce, wrapped in an underwire to muffle the shots, isn't that what you mean? And then you shot her and her love lover- right in the hand- stop in re-load 5 times! That hot blood passion hates there- folks. A love crime- if I have ever seen one! I did not. Along the way, I stopped and threw myself out the window over the just passed the covered bridge

and I got back in the car and drove to a hotel to nap it off. I feel I have been noticeably clear on this point to you- sir.

D.A. Um- Where I get blurred, in your twisted story is where the undertaker said your wife lay dead for a week rotting in the arms of her lover. And then you say you did, not? pierced with hundreds of .38 caliber bullets and gashes. Does that strike you like a whimsical twist of fate, Mr. Delgado, or is it just me and my thinking?

2

You claim you through your gun into the creek /river after the homicides took place. That is convenient. Softly

speaking he said- Yes- Yes. It does- but…

D.A. - I am apologetic, Mr. Delgado, I do not think the jury heard that. Say it- YES IT DOES- you see even he says it. D.A. - I find it unequivocally inconvenient that the gun or knife was not found and examined to match up or that all the blood and guts were washed away from the bodies. YOU COULD and SICK- just by that way you said that sir. Why did you toss it? I was not sure what I would do with it, that is why. She had it coming, no? No-comment- I said. D.A - Grotesque concurrence. IF YOU SAY SO- and they, I said. Me- That was the actuality of it all.

D.A. - Do you evoke all the testimonies?

Me- It is what they say not I! We drained

that river for three weeks, and nary a gun or knife, or underwire were found. NARY-1! So, no comparison can be made between your gun and the bullets, or the knife, and the holes in the face and breast- and the cuts on the virginal areas- and the gun residue on the panties. Occupied look at the photos of this all-and what was taken from the gory- bloody sailors covered stiffs of the preys. Of this could blood animal- That's also fitting, isn't it, Mr. Delgado?

3

Me- It is the truth. nary a gun was found. People, you have overheard all the proof, you know all the details. We

have suspicion of the act of the crime. So- o what do you say for yourself? NOTHING! I said, with a faint, bitter smile, or do what you want- my life was over when she passed. Meanwhile- you say your side- I will speak mine- I am innocent of this corruption, sir, I find it decidedly inconvenient, that the gun was under no circumstances found by your men. The D.A. holds the jury enthralled with his final synopsis-

We have footprints, and fingerprints- we have his semen in her body- we have his hair found on her- what more do you need. Tire tracks. Shots distributed and spared all over the lover's

room- their naked body showing it all do you see all the shales on the ground, which bears his fingerprints. A broken jar, equally with fingerprints. Most of all, we have a lovely, exquisite young 17-year-old girl and her older lover lying dead in each other's arms.

They succumb to temptation. But then again was their sin so unlimited as to value a death verdict of assassination?

5

Looking down along line 12, moving from one JUDGE to all the faces and eyes showing that it was all over for me. A revolver holds six shells, not eight. Some of you do not get that- the ladies in

the room. I yield to you this was not a mercurial crime of lust! No this was revenge- of not getting what he wanted- which is something this man does not like- by the ways of it. - Do you have to get your way all the time, don’t you? He asked me- not necessarily I said. Like I said this may well be unwritten, if not excused. Nope, this was a payback of a much more inhuman and pitiless nature.

Contemplate! - mayhem! 100 per victim! 50/50. I suspect your answer to that would be yes- no? No comment was given- I have no further questions- you are done. Why did you shout yourself in the head instead? I was not that crazed…

yet you do that to her and him- I see life being taken here from them as also you. And while you think about that, think about this… your ass belongs to where you are going! He picks up a revolver, spins the cylinder before their eyes, and pops the sound of it… in my face holding it to my head. As if a fair barker spinning a wheel of fortune- to see if it would blow my head off for what I did not do.

6

It only would tack one shout to the head he said- like this as he made the gun pop at mine- see it is not hard to do this… what do you will say about that? A gasp was made… saying umm hum… That

means he fired the gun empty over and over and over… and then stopped to reload at direct range- a cram so heinous I can wrap my head around it! And this man there your dad sits there for your behalf- sick- dad you are not right either- the only one on his said- the rest of the town heated him for being who he was… I knew it was all one-sided.

Again, and repeatedly! Many bullets and slashes per nude lover… right in the head, chest, and body look at the girl's virginal wounds- come one now. An old woman JURORS shiver at the sight of it. As she holds the black and white photograph- did you see this woman over

there miss say your name- lock him up and throw away the keys- I am done talking- do it. You, people, are all decent, God- dreading Christians and such- like me. But I say that not good enough- do we hang him or let him rot for it- ROT- ROT- ROT- there was talk among the people in the room, you know what to do.

7

By the power vested in me by the State of Pennsylvania, I hereby order you to serve two life sentences, back-to-back, one for both of your victims. So be it- tack this man out of my room- said- Layhe. Voices- say he is- Guilty- Guilty- Guilty- I stand before them all saying thanks for

your time. - get out of here- they said to me… THE JUDGE aristocracies down at me with fury, he said- You assault with your ways- and actions and I better than your attitude- I take you like an arctic cold and brutal, curl fella, Mr. you make my skin could and crawling just looking in those blue could stonily eyes. It drains the color of my skin just to look at you- not caring- and your cold icy ways. He wraps his gavel as we then all get up cheering- but I did not. It was all over for me… I knew- it… (Cut)

Titus Back- He slips Klit a pack of smokes, smooth sleight-of-hand. Making his way in for rejection, the AN IRON-

BARRED DOOR part as I walk in the room. I must sit, (sit) he said- and do nicely- trying not to slouch. The chair is uncomfortable with rusty metal. They say you have served 30 years of a life sentence for your paperwork. Boy- you feel that you have done your part. That you have done enough time no- for whom and what you are and did? Do you feel transformed… by your time? I am no longer a hazard to any younglings- Absolutely, sir. Unquestionably. I have learned my lesson- if - if that is what you want to know. I can in all conscience say I am an altered man. You are not a man you are a boy always remember that- oh well yes sir. It said that you took a white girl-

by force- and then killed her. Is that right? It was- I was young- and dumb-you are still dumb to remember that BOY! That is God's truth. - Nigger’s just like you do not have souls- the man said- um yes sir, I see that. No doubt about it, I get it. I said- there was no hope here. The men just stare at me like I should have gotten the chair- and not breathing the same air. The One stifles girl a yawn- saying get this meat out of my sight and lock ‘IT’ up. She was joking- yes maybe- no- shout it before it gets away, she said.

A big rubber stamp slams down: ‘OVERRULED’ in red cap ink. And then signed off by all the whites in the room. I

get up piss in my mind yet do not show it- I get out and there this pain in the ass… Klit said- do you have those smocks (get the F*CK out of my face white boy you are making me look bad to my man.) I am looking over the courtyard with a gun pointed at my head- I no. Whoever named this place The Little Rock was not kidding- said one of the men standing with is a group. I turned 55 yesterday. Some birthday- I got. When is your birthday? I asked- Klit's (I do not know.) I do not remember it- Stan- Jeez, what kind of juvenile life did you have? I said- short- and fast. There is always the possibility that some asshole will be insulted, isn't there? Do not say much- that pissed him

off I said? Yes- he not good about it- he is pissed I said. What do you want, boy? - He said to me… I moved on… The horns when off and there was cheering and shaking on the fences, boys and men saying nasty shit- as we got all whole new set of pussy in- to freak within the night.

It is dusking out now as the bus pulls in with the man above us with their guns and are dicks- saying run I will blast it off. High stone walls topped with guards, and winding concertina wire, set off at intermissions by looming guard towers like a castle. The glow of the little windows seems eerie and could- as I

shiver my way down into the gates of the massive cold, damp, and spooky, building.

It was not more than a day, that went by this week man walked up to me saying- I can get you Damn near anything, within reason. A bottle of brandy to celebrate your teen's high school graduation. Or first freak- or cards with girls on them- or underwear without holes. -I said to him Can you get me a BRADSHAW CRANDELL 40s Redhead Nude pin-up drawing? Of the girl- sorry to say I do not have her riding shoved in me under short but yes, I can get you the cute little thing there you see on screen.

It has just turned 1940, and that is when he first came to me, he was not much of a man nor was he a boy. I did not see much in this sick with the gold fork up his ass! Blunt end first- or so the boys said.

Look at all the cons- hundred in the courtyard. Playing catch, shooting crabs, chatting with each other, making deals. Fighting, shaking, and ass freaking. Isometrics old-fashioned. A stark room waits beyond. As the big black door slides open with enormous clinking sounds.

8

I have never seen a shitter so sorry-looking shit load in all my pussy

eating life- said the simple man- as I walked past. a long table. An empty chair faces them. We are now in six HUMORLESS MEN sit side by side at saying dumb shit, and place bets on who was freaked over the night before, like the night before- my first night the bet was on the fat black guy- that was killed for spitting in the guard's face. And taking a dump on the floor on the way in as he was dragged by his balls. Oh yes, they hose you down and march you in ass naked- I remember that night also.

(Back) [move up if you want]

Titus Back- come in, put on his cap, and wait by the chair- seeing me. I

emerge into fading daylight, sprawl unglamorous through the commotion, worn cap on his head, exchanging hellos, and doing the minor trade. He is an important man here; I saw for a black man I was okay with… (yet was not 100% sure.)

9

I gaze around, rejected by prison walls. I came to EBENSBURGH Prison in early 1940- Titus Back for murdering his young girl and the fella she was banging. The bus lurches forward, RUMBLES through the gates. I would call the man pedantic- said Titus Back. DAN, captain of the guard, slams his baton into Bradly's

back- and then into another man’s back for asking too many questions. Bradly goes to his knees, gasping in pain. BOOS and SHOUTS from the onlookers. The TOWER GUARD All clear- he yells! LOOKOUTS method the bus with carbines. You can see all the faces looking sad- as the door jerks open- by Dan from the outside. And unlocked- with a key. Dan Flakier, captain of the guard, slams his baton into my back hard, and then into my adulthood. Bradly holds against him one of the Men in front of me, almost dragging him down to the ground killing him. The new PUSSYs debark, bound together single file in 2 rows, discontinuous sourly at their environs. I

fell to my knees also by this man pulling me downward with him- I thought I was next, gasping in pain. BOOS and SCREECHES from the listener's older inmates. Titus Back- said- it came to me to be known within the walls, he was a big-time businessman- making more money- than I could dream of a real estate investor- within oil and gas- some time shoving the money down his pants. The same could be said for his girl too… respectable labor, and education for a gentleman as undeveloped as he was at the field when you deliberate on how unadventurous this is these days. They met in high school, she was all he wanted, and vis-vers-a they fed off one another's-

it was a sick unholy- and unhealthy relationship.

10

Takin' bets today- yep? Titus Back- pulls out his notepad and pen. Tolerate Wide-ranging? Pope shit in the woods? Smoke or coins, bettor's choice. The coin you can get smokes with coin- dumb ass. Titus Back- There they are, boys- what puss- is going to get freak- and cry for mommy. The betting game when one… picking the pussy, that they wanted to freak over. Flakier- get on your feet- and stand like a man- PUSSY- before I freak the said out of you! So-o freaking ass hard you never walk again. They were

sitting in a tight little rower looking over the town- up high. Odile- I'd Never- ever seen such a sorry-er- looking' pile of cow shit in my days. Hailer- Comin' from you, kid, you being so beautiful and all… that's cute- what you change his clothes too? You want to suck my dick? No- this one here does, and he tapped- Titus Back on the head in form of him.

That lanky sack of shit, third from the front- is the puss-pony I want. He will be the first. Look at this pussy going to town sucking on that dick! Said- Stan- I hear this black man said this as I went past him. High roller. Who is your pussy BITCH? Jacker- Smokes I want- he was

puffing on two at once- there was one in his ear shoved. Put me down for their packs. Stan- OH Bullshit. I will take that freak on hardcore. Grolh- Me too. Other hands go up saying that it is the sack of piss and shit that we will hit. I see this black man- iotas the names- as I walk past now even slower with the line that I am changed to. Stan- You're out some coinage, boy. Take my word for it boy I will win. You are so smart, you call it- I did. Stan- I like even for a nigger! But your puss is going down and going to be freaked. Like this one’s ass last night by Dan the Gard- the guy's snicker! For it may have been true… ha! I say that flabby-floppy freak right there the- lard-

ass- that should have a tuba playing with every step he makes... let us see... (Okay) 11th from the front. Put me down for a quarter roll. You can say that small thing in your slack is that con roll can you look at some of these ladies coming in. Funny-asshole! Said one of them. on Fat Ass- got it! You are out some man… That is five cigarettes and a half roll of -cone. Any takers- on this white big hairy ball-sucking fat ass!?

More hands go up and more. I look around- and the others are paraded along, forced by their handcuffs that are changed to small baby steps, recoiling under the barrage of boos and yells.

Saying all kinds of freaked up shit. The Oldtimers are shaking the fence and the pussy is looking scared of getting freaked over hard by them- you can see the lust in their eyes by some, trying to make the Johnny-come-latelies shit their pants. Some of the new fish shout back, but mostly they look terrified. Especially that man I came to call Bradly.

Hey there puss you want to suck this- one said- and I look at him with aw-ah-gross on my face, Titus Back- I must confess I did not think much of um- The first time I laid eyes on him walking in the stone-cold rot your brain out place. He might ‘a be important on the outside of

these walls, yet not here on the inside… nonetheless, in here, he is just a little pussy looking to get freaked in prison grays by horny man. Like I said- it looks like shift gust could upset him to the mud below his shaking knees and feet. Affirmatively- this was my primary impression of the gentleman.

Sid- Watch it- say, Boy? The little fella on the end sure got it. The crier tonight- that is going to lose his mind. It always happens at night when someone is going to give out. And become the pussy! There is not one man here- that has not wanted freedom or their mommy! Long dark cold nights- they make you think of

all that you did and did not do right in your life… it well dives you over the edge like most on the first night here. I stake half a pack- for my stick with the fork up his anus. Any takers? One the done meat?

Stan- wow- wow- wow- that is such a rich bet. Come ‘on, boys, who is going to prove me mistaken? Some of the boy’s hands went up and some were making gestures too, I got the finger! Guys- brave ass wipes- no? BRAVE! persons, ten clouds of smoke apiece and a half roll. That is, it, gentlemen, this boy is in and getting de-lazar and freak in their faces- hoses them down- and the bets are closed. Me- I pocket the notepad- kissing

it for the win. A VOICE comes over the P.A. speakers: saying get inside it time for lock-up. Old music runs in my mind from my free days back with I was a young black boy- sinking into bars, to see bands and key players.

11

WARDEN Cameron Marquez ambles us to look at his all and holy ways, all neutral man stands before his greatness- naked as the day we came out of our mommas in blood and goo- cover in shit. A complete BIBLE freak- this man is and one that I am sure is not all and holy- just by the way he grins too much for my liking- I do not trust his type- you will get

freaked hard in the ass- like with the feel of it being a steam train… hauling ass into the tight hole. Yet some of these guys here love, that feeling… they have eyes on me now. I see church ways of being a fake pester type- angel pin in hand- marking off are names that mean jack shit to him. Welcome TO EBENSBURGH YOUR FREAKING DICK belongs to me! You are going to be sucking it long and hard from this day one- you will learn this fast- or have your balls cut off- got it? YES, sir! The other shit- you get from my man here. This is Mr. Flakier; captain of the guard you have met. And feel in your adulthood already as you were all welcomed by becoming ladies in these walls. I am Mr.

Marquez, the warden. You will get this if we feel you are out of line… the Billy club to the dick! He assesses the newcomers with flinty eyes and glare and odium. Understand- Yes! You are sinners and pussy come, that is why they sent you to me- now it is my job to eat you all out for this. ‘He could eat an inferno and piss out ice cubes!’ WARDEN- castle rock – some call this place- we have the lighthouse on the top there is no way out-and even so-o those that would get that far would be shot on the spot in the head- this place is never busted out of- were the best in the stat! - and the most malicious. (Talking) Rule number

1: no blaspheming. 2 No betting off- or shitting or pissing in the cells of the sink in E bloc- there will be no fighting- or sexual cantatas- The caption rolled his eyes like yes right- hypocrite! For I knew by the looks this was so backward… even this man here was getting it in the ass! - His wife that he would not stop talking about being everything she was not… I will not have the Lord's name taken in vain in my prison. The man said it out loud- The other directions you will figure out as you go along, as stated. Any questions? Where do we shit, piss, and eat? It was said there were no bathrooms in the 23-hour

lock-up- so-o what- were and how? A gangly- lanky man said.

As I was getting firehose down in front of all the men next to me- push and shoved hard- like fresh meat. I hear the others, that were here long then I returning to their cell blocks for the evening count- and then lights out. The new pussies are marched in feeling less than manly. Guards unlock the shackles. We are all stopped, and we lose all that was our free life as we strip down- alone with the chains drop away from our now cold bodies, clanking to the stone floor under us. Hey, you numb-nuts look here- hey look here- he did not he hit him in the

dick with a bully club- saying do not disrespect me- FREAK!! Keep your eyes looking at me quires. You- yes you- suck this man dick! - what you heard me, and he did with a gun at his dick or else. I was the first man in the shower! With all their dicks flapping in my eyes! Some were just freaking gay looking at me.

It was not even my 2nd day here and I asked the man, that can get it for you if- hey Titus Back- Can you get me a coal bucket- a gas lamp- hard hat- for on my table- and a mining hammer, with the caw- in my room? and some old hand tools just to remember- my life before I hit it big. Also, I want you to get me the ID

mining tag that was mine number 3700. Funny all this was in plain sight… I was not hiding it. Except for the hammer- that I head in a fake bottom in the coal bucket that I made from an old coffee can- and dripped in… run some mud- around it and it looks right- that graduate would never no. Titus Back, I was okay with it for it was memorabilia of his life- that I got smuggled in from his home- that they were selling off. Shit, he wanted- and by what he said it was all worn down- nonlethal- and not usable- Freak- I did not care I was making my 30% upcharge. Why the hammer- it is small- I said, planning to go somewhere he said. Ha- no- you can get out of this place, and I

sure I would need more than this thing- I don't even have a plan too, after what I did- I belong here what do you think? I have not made up my mind yet... I am fine with you if you are fine with me- sure- we are all the same in my book all the cons. Why? I did not kill this girl- yet you did the man he said- with a giggle- ha- nope- I should have thought- and he laughed harder- I said I was framed. Do you, do it? yes, he said- why- I can say yet... I need to see what I think of you- sure enough, I said back and walked with style away- not caring about anything- in this wall and remembering her in my mind.

12

FLACKIER Off with them clothes! Is standing ass naked- And I did not say take all day doing it, did I?

Flacker rams the tip of his club into ALL the con's JUNK they are all gasping for breath- and grappling. yet again some are blowing chunks, the man falls to his knees or is doubled over. (Now eat it- he said) CON- When do we shit and get food to live off? Cued by Marquez's glance, Flackier steps up to the con and yells right in his face: saying what is and not permitted. FLAKIER- Your give shit and you take this shit, and we say when you shit! And you sleep in your shit! Got it- shitter! YOU are ball-sack-sucking dick

junky- Tit- smacking pussy licker- MOTHERFREAK! Flackier takes his place at Marquez's side again. The men shed their clothes. Within seconds, all stand naked. Softly: MARQUEZ Any other questions NOW? Some look up and take yet another hit. He said I believe in self-control and the holy spirit. Here, you will receive both, if only you believe that you can have that self-control. He is throwing the bible- down to the floor at their feet, saying- you all going to hell for what you have done in your life- if your choice to fall; to this book you can die here with the hope of making it up… yet I do not feel you can at this point. Put your faith in God- Your DICK belongs to this man here,

and he points to his caption. Welcome! The con gets a huge scoop of white delousing powder thrown all over them. Flackier shoves all of us CONs into a steel cage, that has the spray jets in it to be disinfected- open at the front- with a man and woman girls looking up at us. TWO GUARDS open with a fire hose, that sprays fixed in the face and body- hitting like knives on the sick barning from industrial soap. The con is slammed against one another at the back of the cage, sputtering and hollering. Moments later, the water was cut, and the cones yanked out. And given a number- I can see it for my eyes are red balls of blood- from all that was slashed into them.

FLAKIER- Delouse that piece of shit 5 more times in the eyes for killing a 17-year-old girl, that he freaked at 14! The EXECUTOR slides a short stack of items through the slot- like a top and pants and that was it- prison clothes- no underwire- yet a Bible. (That is nice) and I get my teeth chipped out. All the men are processed quickly haling ass- a blast of water in the face and hands flying all over me in places that only my wife touched by their RN, powder- and shit, clothes, and a Bible… A naked CON I am to them, as I step before a DOCTOR and get a cursory exam. A penlight is shining in his eyes, ears, nose, and throat. I sit on the aluminum table ass sticking. Gasping and

coughing, blinking powder from his eyes, I rub some she grabs my adulthood with a fast cold hard grip, and she said- flopping shit around- I even got penetrated- with her finger. (D block for a week to tack fact with the others that have Genital warts- or on that line.) I have never seen so much gross cock in my face she said. Save this shit and get it over with Caption said… I have a job to do too. RN. Bend over or I do it for yah! (You going to jack me too I said) Funny I got yet more teeth out that day. D block is the lowest level above us, and that was home for a few days. Me- the con does what he is asked. A GUARD with a penlight in his teeth spreads his cheeks, peers, up to his ass,

and nods- do you want to hold out your tongue, I said; to her, as she was in the front. Three tiers to a side, concrete, and steel, gray and imposing. Bradly is next up. Cute she said- that is a new one- He gets the same treatment, and she looks at me like why- he not bad looking- (almost flirting.)

The naked tenderfoots are shivering on hard wooden chairs, clothes on their laps, Bibles open. CHAPLAIN- yells- Bradly and the others are marched in, still naked, carrying their clothes and Bibles. He- makes me lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restored my soul... no spit and

piss on it! For this is what you have been doing in your life. New walking to their new homes- holding their top, pants, and shows, The CONS in their cells greet them with SCOFFS, HECKLINGS, and HILARITY. U- HOOOOW- Hay- Sorry your daddy dicks your Momie- One by one, the new men are shown to their yelling and marching to his clap- cells and locked in with a CLANG OF STEEL.

TITUS BACK- when they put you in that cell when those bars slam home, that is when you know it is for real.

The first night's the toughest, no doubt about it. They march you are in half-blind from that delousing shit, your

so-o ass naked as the day you are born, Bible shouts on your dick to hide it- also reading- what you have done wrong, skin burning like piss in the eyes, ass hole hurting not able to shit they throw on you... into rot.

Bradly is led past and given a cell after our row. Titus Back watches from his cell, cigarette dangling from his finger's arms slung over the crossbars. nothing left but all the time in the world to think. A long cold season in hell stretching out ahead... The old life is blown away in the bat of an eye... shit! Yes, pissed it away… Sam listens to the CLANGING below. He watches Bradly

and a few others being brought up to the 2nd tier. SAM- Somebody always breaks down crying. Most new fish come close to madness the first night. It happens every time- every nightfall. The only inquiry we have is, who is it going to be? SAM- I had my chance on Bradly... It is as good a thing to bet on as any, I for one conjecture, in here where your life is shit.

The bars slam home… He gazes around at his new surroundings, taking it in. He slowly begins to dress... He hiatuses, listening. Sam lies on his bunk below us, tossing his softball toward the Stan and catching it again- and then to

Klits. SAM- I remember my first night. It seems a long time ago now.

FOOTPATHS he way to me-sterling- in a roll- approaching near, easy-going, resonating in a hollowly on the stone courtyard- looking over the lights of the dusking day. Bradly is alone in his cell, clutching his clothes. GUARD- That's lights out! Good night, ladies. Darkness now. Silence. Sam looms from the darkness, leans on the bars. Listen. Waits- From somewhere below comes faint, ghastly tittering. The prissy grade looks the rows toward Sam's cell. The lights bump off in series. The guard exits,

footsteps reverberating away from me and them.

13

Klit’s, I know some big old dick-suckers- bull queers, like me who would love to make your social contact... in the shower tomorrow especially they would love to see if they can find that dick of yours and wiggle it around. The white schmaltzy butt of yours... Sam waits at the bars. Smoking. Listening. He cranes his head, peers, down toward Bradly's cell. Nothing. Not a peep.

A big VOICES drift through the cell block, taunting:

Pus- puss- pussy- You're going to like it here, new pussy. A whole lot... You are takin' this down now isn't- you… pussy- the man said, flapping his dick around at me, new pussy? Going to be a quiz later. An evil stone growth on the Maine landscape. The moon hangs low and baleful in a dead sky. The headlight of a PASSING TRAIN cuts through the night. Camel toe hey you- oh, Fat-Ass puss over there I can see you. Talk to me, baby boy. I know you are in there- I see your rolls. I can hear you breathing and are you going to blow a kiss my way? Now, do not you eavesdrop to these nitwits, hear? CELLBLOCK FIVE midnight you can hear this all… A CELLBLOCK

GUARD strolls into the frame of sight. They are all not too bright, are they the Gard said- (somebody's LAUGHS and losing their mind about how they won their bet.) Keep it down. Fresh pussy...fresh pussy...fresh pussy...fresh pussy... OH, GOD! I DON'T HAVE ITS PLACE HERE! I WANNA GO HOME to momma! The mommy's boy fat freak- IT WAS said. That looked like he ate too many Italy style meals. AND Its FAT-ASS-dick suck in 5 THAT CRIED FOR MOMMY! NO RACE BOYS I GOT UM BY THE HAIRY BALLS. Boy- Boy- hey gay boy- This is not such a bad place. I will introduce you around, make you feel right at home. Hey, see this, it is going in you!

He- he- he. Fat-pussy suck- lets out a LOUD HOWL of despair: as he was taken in all ways. What Christ is this happen and shit- freaks? GUARDS pour in, led by Flackier himself. ‘He took the Lord's name in vain!’ Shut the freak up-or you’ll eat your bible ‘I'm- telling' the warden!’ You'll be telling' um with your tongue shoved up your ass, and then pulled out your nose- if you do! The lights bump on hard 2 by 2. Fresh pussy...fresh pussy...fresh pussy...fresh pussy... AND Its FAT-ASS- dick sucker- The place goes nuts. Fat Ass- dick come goo- galloper throws himself screaming against the bars. FLAKIER- What's your glitch you fat freaking barrel of monkey CUM? The

entire block starts CHANTING: 'I WANNA- want to GO-a go HOME! I WANT MY MOTHER.' PLEASE! THIS AIN'T TRUE! I AIN'T ACTUAL TO-a BE HERE! NOT-a I am! FLAKIER - I am not going to count to one- you all shut the freak up - for a bedtime story! The big freak keeps weeping and sniveling. Flackier draws his baton, gestures to his men by ripping him up and down. And shoving the bully club up his ass- and then in the teeth- Open it- freak for saying all this and making my day hard. Flackier arrives at Fat-Ass' cell, bellowing through the bars: A GUARD unlocks the cell. Flackier pulls Fat-Ass out and starts beating him with the baton, brutally

raining blows. Fat-Ass falls, tries to crawl-out of the open shit room. A GUARD unlocks the cell. Flackier pulls Fat-Ass out and starts beating him with the baton, brutally bucketing blows. Fat-Ass falls, tries to crawl yet one more time. The place goes dead silent. All we hear now is the dull WALLOP-THUMP-STRIKE of the baton and sex act you do not want to see in your life. Fat-ass passes out. Flackier-gets in a few more licks and finally stops. ‘I had your mother and that how you were made! She was not that great, other than giving head- the puss was too wide! For your sister- coming out! And see this dick of mine it's bigger than yours!’ ‘Sh-h ass wipes. The screws will hear...’ ‘hey you-

hey- Pussy-e-e pussy-e-e-e-e…’ SAM The boys always go puss digging with first timers… besides, they do not quit till they finger freak, someone, into their dick-sh ways. PUSSY-cons go soundlessly irrational in his cells- yanking and pulling throwing shit at Klits over the way. Pussy fat freak is crying, trying not to hyperventilate. One man paces like a caged animal… another sits concerning his cuticles bloody…a third is moping noiselessly…a fourth is dry-heaving into the toilet… this PUSSY went where he was dunked in the shit covered bull- by the girl and he inhaled so much water and prissy file-ness I do not want to say- other than the fact that he died and we all say

as he dragged his body back in and made a show of it, yet no gave a shit I lost money and smokes that is all we cared about. The VOICES keep on, sly and creepy in the dark... PUSS- Puss Possie! The man says as Fat Freak was hanging over the rail dead. FLAKIER- Get this tub of shit covered come down to the sanatorium. (Nobles around are looking in awe yet not comply caring.) If I hear so much as a rat fart in here the rest of the night, by your Deity and his sonny baby boy Jezzzie, you will all visit the medical wing. Every Mother freaking- cock sucker in this block. He lay there for three weeks, and no one cared. In EBENSBURGH your just meat on a rack…

rotting your days away. The guards wrestle saying to carry him off- it did not happen- they need to have a theory as to why he died. So, he pushed his boy down the steps saying that was it- and the dead freak rolled- like a bowling ball- about ready to hit pins. All the FOOTSTEPS reverberation fades away. The Lights went off- was all Darkness again even in the cells. Silence- nothing- nothing- nothing.

14

LOUD SIGNAL. Sam stares through the bars at the main floor below, eyes riveted to the small puddle of blood where Fat Ass went down. The GUARDS

hold their headcounts to the HEAD BULL, who jot on a clipboard. His first night in the joint, Bradly My pussy cost me two packs of Cigarettes and some change. He never made a sound... The expert locks are thrown THUMP! The cons step from their cells, lining the tiers. Sam peers at Bradly, checking him out. Bradly stands in line, collar fastened, hair combed. Bradly goes through the breakfast line, gets a scoop of glop on his tray. WE PAN BRADLY through the noise and misunderstanding... and discover Knaggier and ROOSTER Duffie are watching Bradly go by. Bogs sizes Bradly up with a salacious gleam in his eye, mutters something to Fowl. Rooster

laughs. He carefully pussy-e-s it out with his fingers. Bradly finds a table occupied by Sam and his regulars choose a spot at the end where not an insignificant person is sitting. Ignoring their stares, he picks up his spoon -- and pauses, seeing something in his food. It is a squirming puss- CATCALLER. You are going to look good squirting down on me- Bradly grimaces, unsure what to do with it. HATLEN- is sitting closest to Bradly. At age 85, he is a senior citizen that is lost in his days and established occupant. THAT WE ALL TRUST AND LOVE! SAID SAM! HATLEN, you going to eat that THAT TERRE

SONNY? Bradly cannot bear to watch. BRADLY- WHY

YOU

GOING TO? HATLEN WOULD YOU- mind IF…? A

SMALL kitten-

POPS ITS HEAD OUT OF HIS SHART- Bradly passes the WIGGLY THING to HATLEN. HATLEN examines it, rolling it between his fingertips like a man checking out a fineness OF IT FOR HIS BABY. Bradly is riveted with worry. She came in my window at them when I was getting books out to make my rounds. I had to… Mm. Nice THIS ONE READY TO

BE BUTTERFLY- OH WELL THAT’S OKAY- HERE BUTTEN’S.

HATLEN GIRLIE kitten Buttons says thanks. I'm looking' after her till he's old enough to go on her own- my little one. Bradly nods proceeds to eat what was called. Carefully. Klit’s approach- with talk about the cat.

15

Tigger- Oh, Jesus Christ, here he comes blotting and beaming. Good for you ass hole you got the win- howdy, ladies. It is a fine sunrise. ‘Yen got- why it's fine?’ He said in his dumb way of speech. He drops his tray down cracking it and sits his ass just as hard on the wood bench.

The men start pulling out cigarettes- and rolls and handing them down by his face that was lying on the table- he was drooling. Hell, I sure do love that pussy of mine. I accept as true I owe that puss a big sloppy kiss and BJ when I see him. That is right, send 'em all down my way- I win this- I win. I want to see 'em lined up in a row, pretty line of sexy dancers. An impressive pile forms. he curves down and inhales extremely, sniffing the perfume of dictation. Rapture. Suck my ass... Gee, Sam. Awful shame, your Puss coming' in dead last and all, speaking of dead you see that fat freak is still hanging in there. Say Drywell, you pull sanatorium liability they get that thing out yet- they

are burning him at the end of the week if you want to see. I shake my head sacked, to what the kill said… he got joy out of it, he turns back to his food. The silence mounts. I glance around. Men resume eating. Softly I ask his name? WE DON’T FREAKING CARE- PUSS- EAT OR I'LL KILL YOU FOR FUN! BRADLY- I was wondering if anyone knew his name. I GOT YOU HE SAID! What the freak D0 you care, new pussy? HE’S YOUR QUIRE? (He resumes eating his slop.)

A DEAFENING NOISE of industrial washers and presses. Bradly works the laundry line. A nightmarish job. IT Doesn't matter what his mother's

freaking name was an asshole. Showerheads mounted in bare concrete. Bradly showers with 100 or more men. No modesty here. At least the water is good and hot, soothing his trouser muscles. He is new at it. BOoB, the con supervisor looks and says go, elbows him aside, and shows him how it has done. The Allies, as they are called in the walls! Duffie- appears from the billowing steam, smiling- saying I am going to get you Babygirl, checking Bradly up and down. Other sis-girls appear from the sides holding down for the ass hole licking. DUFFIE Hard to get… yet I did, and I will keep getting it too… I like that that as so do you- a baby girl! Umm. Bradly tries to

step past them. He gets shoved around, nothing serious, just some slap and tickle. Jackals sizing up prey. DUFFIE You're some sweet punk ant you…? Have you been breaking in yet baby? I am taking that and reamed it out! He said… Bradly breaks free, flushed and shaking. He hurries off, leaving the three Allies laughing. UN AH'S! Bradly lies staring at the nightfall, unable to sleep- ass hurting- he thinks and thinks of a way out like slitting his wrists and freak. The next morning after looking at the poster all night thinking about the man he was and not a gay man's dream- Bradly takes this as a cue to amble over. Seeing the lady in

the room eyeing him with the look of nice shoes wants to freak!

16

SAM- The wife-killing hotshot. Hello. I am Bradly, I said to that- as he yelled at me. SAM- Individuals say you are a cold pussy all dry inside and freak- a hard freak to get. The black men of trust at this point said- a man I learned to admire even for being darker. Bodybuilding period in the yard now. Sam plays catch with Klits and Stan, lazily tossing a softball from one place to another. Sam notices Bradly off to the side. Nods with greetings to me. I offer my hand- and he takes it as a shake

saying I need you backing up. What do you say- he coming after you- he said with a shank- what hand- lift- I bunch him out and get 3 weeks in the hole… Sam glances at the hand, ignore it? The game continues… with me adding in a fastball to the head and I get it. BRADLY- How do you know that… that I did that? I did not- Why'd you, do it? SAM- I keep my ear open for the story! BRADLY- I did not, since you asked the question, I was not the one that pulls it out if you want what I am saying. SAM- Every Tom, Dick, and Harry blameless in here at EBENSBURG, don't you know you get that on the way in? or so they think and say- boy, you will fit right in, with us all saying we were set

up for this shit even if they need it yah-know. (Off to the other man Bradly's stares.) Klit’s! What are you in for, boy? He said back- Didn't do it! Attorney freaked me, and the wife would not! What are you going to do? Sam gives Bradly a look of well you see. -See…? - So, they think mishit smells Better than regulars. That true… if you think so… Did I hear that? What you say- I do not care- he said back. He sends the softball right back, passing it into Stan's hands. Stan drops the ball and grimaces, wringing his stung hands. Stan nudges Klit’s. Watch this… He gusts up to and heaves the ball hard-right at Bradly's head. Bradly sees it coming out of the corner of his eye,

whirls, and catches it. Beat. SAM- has not made up my mind yet. I want to go to the Bahamas that is where we wed you know- under a tree- wind blowing in the breeze, she said yes- and we made- love in a hammock looking over the blue-green sea. SAM- I see lots of rocks. I show- the Quartz? - and coal of the train that passes in the night- that the plan right hopes a ride out? Maybe? Bradly squats motions Sam to join him. Bradly grabs a handful of dirt and sifts and said look at a pace of coal it through his hands. Do you think you can get me a new hammer- like my old one…? Quartz, sure. And look. Mica. Shale. Silted granite. There is some graded limestone, from when they cut this

lace out of the hill. He finds a pebble and rubs it clean; I want to go somewhere other than here…. He tosses it to Sam if you get in trouble, you do not know me. Why- I can live like this- but you need to be here for what you did- well just like the boy I did not do it- and that is the truth. AND no one has made it… you know… so I do not care- okay… if that is what you want- 50 cones- and 10 packs. I love this shit it was part of my old life- it needs to be aging so I do not forget who I was- Sam- or you would like to sick it through some guard’s head? Yes, plant your sex toy in somebody's skull is that it? I do not give a shit but do not say where you got it- the same as be for with the poster. I

know that boy! No, that not it at all man. BRADLY, I have no rivals here. That what you think- your dumb shit- and I know that is not so- for the boy talk! SAM- No? Just wait for that going freak you hard like last time. Sam- skims his gaze past Bradly. I and he are watching them looking at me with sex eyes. SAM- Word gets around. The Allies have taken a real shine to you, yes, they have. Especially this man **here**.

Klits over a tray of food- Everyone who runs this place loves surprise inspections- so do we- one guard cut me open to see what was up to my ass- I did not want to shit for weeks. They ignore

some things, but not a gadget like that. They will find it, and you will lose it. Mention my name, we will never do business again. Not for a pair of shoelaces or a pack of gum, or pair of clean underwire- or a sock of your cock. Would it help if I explained to them, I am not homosexual? They do not meet the requirements to be called- a man- or home-o's. You must be in here for as long as they get their way. BRADLY Tell me something. 'Encyclical queers take by force, that's all they want or know.' I would grow- some balls- and eyes in the back of my cranium if I were you- and tuck your dick in. BRADLY- Thanks for the guidance. SAM That comes free, to you

only- I feel I like you for some freaking reason. Giggling- about that hammer- you have seen this- But you understand my concern- is becoming yours, you want to escape. Tunnel and go over the wall maybe? If there's trouble, I doubt a lump of coal- hammer would do much of anything- I miss the joke- why is this funny- it too Freaking little to do that- what- you will see. What is so funny? They want me out of all these boys. (Bradly laughs civilly) You'll know when you see the hammer I want, there is not much of a change in any of it- yet I must try. SAM- I will see what I can do about it, rises, slapping dust, as he moved about… it is a

waste of money and your time and days. Okay, I want it.

I understand. Thank you, Mr...? SAM. The name's Sam. Pleasure doing business with you. They shake your ass over do not say jack shit. They shake hands- Bradly strolls off looking around with no cars at all. He had a quiet way about him, a walk and a talk that just was not ordinary around here. He walks in a park-like just gets a breath of air. Sam watches him go... saying I was wrong about the kid. Goodman... no? um hum... SAM I could see why some of the boys took him for stuck-up- walking with a stack up against his ass or something. Yet

without an intention to harm others or others no burdens after doing what he did. Like he had on an obscure covering that would armor him from this hall land of walls and stone.

(The 3 resumes playing catch as he looks about.) Yes, I think it would be fair to say I liked Bradly from the start. Lying on his bunk, Sam unfolds the four sides. SAM- Years later, I found out he had brought in quite a bit more than just ten dollars... A ten-dollar bill. Sam gets his breakfast and heads for a table. Bradly falls in step, slips him a tightly folded square of paper. Under watchful supervision, CONS are off-loading bags of

dirty laundry from a truck. Were they bringing some mended tops and pants in for us- He was a man who adapted fast. Underneath vigilant supervision, CONS are off-loading bags of dirty laundry from a 1920’s truck for the train cars. A certain bag hits into his arms. The TRUCK DRIVER gives a look of okay- at a black con- boy here then strolls over to a GUARD and bull shits. Sam- loads the bag onto a wagon... and walks off with the prize inside past them all, even past the guards that he bought off.

17

Bags are being unloaded. We find Klit’s working the line. Sam- slips the

package out of his sheets, carefully checks to make sure nobody is coming, then rips it open. He pulls out the hammer. It is just as Bradly described. Sam laughs softly. the clean sheets are being handed out. Bradly nods. He leaves the line, weaving his way through the laundry room… he moves onward. Sam deposits his dirty bundle and moves down the line to where- Determination… That is how Bradly joined our happy little EBENSBURGH family with more than five dollars on his person in my hand- he made it with me and my boys. Klits- pushes a cart of books from cell to cell. The rolling library. He finds Sam waiting for him. Sam slips the -hammer, wrapped in a

towel, through the bars, and onto the cart. I catch Sam's eye, turn, and grab a specific stack of clean sheets. He hands it across to Sam cigarettes slide out of Sam's hand into mine, and more than spotless laundry changes hands. Two packs of smoke. It would take a man about 60 freaking years to tunnel under the wall with one of these. Bradly was right. I finally got the gag… that you could only use the hand on them- if they wanted to beat off or you. Bradly's hand snakes through the bars and makes the object disappear. Next comes 10 cigarettes to pay for postage- as Kilt's hands me my shit! HATLEN nods to me as I dump out the rocks from the wall out of

my bucket, never- ever missing a beat. Just like the guy in the next cell over- freak! HATLEN continues, scooping the cigarettes off the cart and into his pocket- to get him a flashlight to dig- also hid in the bucket. He rolls his cart to Bradly's cell, mutters through the bars: HATLEN Middle shelf, wrapped in a towel- Sam unfolds the slip of paper. Penciled neatly on it is a single word: ‘Thanks.’ -out of the shower, the voice said to go to your cells- I was already there a weighting for my new things. The hand comes back and deposits a small slip of folded paper along with more cigarettes. HATLEN turns his cart around and goes back. He pauses, sorting his books- the flashlight was

carved into a book called- The Star girl! A book about a girls' fight for her country- like a twisted holocaust story! Long enough for Sam to snag the slip of paper. Sam unfolds the slip of paper. Penciled neatly on it is a single word: 'Thanks.' Working next to the big washers- a dark, tangled maze of rooms and corridors, boilers and furnaces, sump pumps, old washing machines, pallets of and plats for cars- and hard turns around cleaning supplies and detergents, you name it this was a crap room- where I was about to get it in the ass. Bradly, I had to bet them off... blocking his way… to me- yet he got his way- all did all seven of them. We are assaulted by the deafening noise of the

laundry line. Bradly is doing his job, getting good at it. I worked in the woodshop too, yet the girls got me where my boy was not. I made lots of shit like tables and chairs all for my room. And to sell and make some con cone.

18

Hey, skew when briefest? The grade looked at me and said- freak your mother freaking cock sucking mother tit licking dick slap ass hole with a cheese stick and the ice cream puss finger freak licker sticker! He looms from the shadows to his right, Dick Peters cell on the right of me. A frozen beat. Bradly slams them to the floor, in the lighter, by that… The

next day it was all the same as the last Brady took one for the team in the ass- and I think if it would have kept the same it would have made him go nuts. (Cut-sheets room) steam flying in the air foggy and hot- sweaty man at work… a lady's paradise. Bare-chested- and hard bodies to look at! DUFFIE- Honey, hush I want to freak you, that is all. Bradly backs up, holding them at bay, trying to maneuver through the maze. The Allies keep coming, tense and guarded, eyes riveted and gauging his every move, trying to outflank him. Bradly trips on some old giants smuggle. That is all it takes. Bradly gets yanked to his feet. They are on him in an instant, kicking and stomping.

Duffie applies a chokehold from behind. They propel him across the room and slam him against an old four-pocket machine, bending him over it. Rooster jams a rag into Bradly's mouth and secures it with a steel pipe, like a horse bit. Bradly kicks and struggles, but Lizer and Peter have their arms firmly pinned. Duffie whispers in Bradly's ear: it is long and hard for you baby girl! Um, do you feel me! DUFFIE- That's it, beat on me. It is Better that way when you are hard to get off. Bradly starts screaming and rolling in the pain of the ass freaking, muffled by the tape over his mouth as they all got their way. I saw yet I PULL BACK, not wanting to get the same wrath-

we all knew about it, yet this is the jail where you have what you have and get freak for freaking others in the ass. I wish I could tell you that Bradly fought the good battle, and the Allies left him alone. I wish I could say that- yet that not how it went- to tell you that, would be an ass of a lie- but jail is no enchanted gay world. SLOWLY SPLAYED is Bradly's screaming face and the men holding him down... and the dingy act behind... He never- ever said who did the act on him...but we all knew- I saw it with my eyes- yet did not want what he was getting. And at that time God was doing the time for him, and it was coming out of his ass... that what I thought, at the time. -After lights out...

under the poster, I started making the hole in the wall- I found out the wall was soft from old age- the bars could be spread with the hammer wide enough to get my ass though. It is going to take years- I said. SAM- Things went on like that for a year. The jail life cycle contains predictable, and then more predictable until it is pounded into your head and your brain becomes numb to it all. SAM- The Allies kept at him. From time to time, he was able to fight them off... sometimes not so-o. Numb to all but the pain of past life and the life of now and life you have on the inside. They call out for us to go to the yard for an hour- air and light are good to us-BRADLY WALKS THE YARD,

FACE SWOLLEN, AND BRUISED from the dicks in his mouth, and the slapping he got… Every single day or so habitually, Bradly would show up with renewed bruises and cuts. He starts to sit with me and my guys- he has become one of us at this point- I chat with him the others are warming up some- BRADLY EATS BREAKFAST. A FEW TABLES OVER, DUFFIE wakes up and

A French KISS on the lips saying I see you in the showers tonight. LOVE-YOU baby girl! He said grabbing my adulthood. Klit's guts' up and stared him down. And his lady's as him did run off back to their table.

19

Bradly is working the line into his cell. Warden Marquez 's ‘grain & drain’ vacation. Bread, water, and all the privacy you could want. SAM- They beat the hell out of him. Half the time it landed him in the medical wing... He always fought, that is what I remember. He fought because he knew if he did not fight, it would make it that much easier not to fight the next time. The rake connects, snapping off over somebody's skull. No bed, sink, or lights A stone closet no seat even until you make it and pay for it. Bradly sits on bare concrete, bruised face lit by a faint ray of light falling through the tiny slit in

the steel door. ...the other half, it landed him in solitary. A dick of cars with nude girls on it is all you must look at to pass the time… it is now 1942 and talk of war the inside walls. A new poster for his wall I got him as a gift of being a friend to a boy- this type of girl called a PIN-UP! Something to keep his mind from squirming like a toad. And that is how it went for Bradly. That was his routine. I do believe those first two years were the worst for him. And I also believe if things had gone that way, this place would have been the best for him. But then, in the spring of 1942, the powers-that-be decided that... it was time to do hard labor. Warden Marquez speeches the

assembled cons via 40’s mic: he is dressed stylishly- the war calls of new rails- going from Pittsburgh to New York- PPR rail line- you only have some of this track to lay in our parts. I need 14 volunteers for a week's work. pulling names and reading them off. Sam exchanges a grin with Bradly and the others. You need to build a viaduct over a valley- its high and some will die doing this- there are no tie-down if you wall 3,000 feet (about the height of the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world)- to the ground below- and your walk beams one step in front of the other- Gandydancer's as they call it- We're going to be taking names in this can here... Sam

glances around at his friends. Wouldn't you know it? I and some fellas I know we are among the names called. It only cost us a 2 pack of smokes per man. I made my usual twenty percent, of course. Bradly also catches his eye. I knew we wanted this job, all seven of us! Kilts- Stan- Brad- Me and the others. It was outdoor factors of rewarding, and May is one damn fine year to be occupied outside, and the cone was good too… 10¢ an hour. We can shuffle past, dropping slips of paper into a bucket. Is work inspected- so it had to be right, or it would go to another asshole that wanted it- fast and cheap. There is a crane, and the steel is bangled overhead and riveted,

in the wind- blowing at 30 MPH, one part is down- and you move the whole thing up and do it again 20 supports to do- one down, so high up- Jacker fall, and his dead body just laid there. A guard pushed him- does it matter? No- no on this job. More than 200 men volunteered for the job, and we all got it. TWO CONS dip up a bucket of rivets and tools one a rope to the handle. The rope goes taught. the bucket goes up the side of the new tall steel.

FLAKIER- ...so this shithead lawyer calls long distance from a virgin, and he says, Mr. Flackier? I say yes. He says, sorry to notify you, but your

grandmother just died in a plane crash she was 74.

Klit's- Freak- Damn, Flick. Sorry to hear that. FLAKIER- I am not. she was a freaking bitch. I Runoff years ago from that puss- freak, family is not heard of him since. She should for dead anyway years ago from smoking too hard. So, this attorney prick says, your grandmother died a rich gal. Grandfather was a gold tycoon and shit, close to 3 million dollars. Jesus, how lucky some assholes can get. Yes, why this one a con said. I could use it! Said another. Dick faced guard said- A 3 million dollars. Jeez-us- mother freak! Do you get any of that? 1! That is what

they left me. Dick's face- said- Holy freaking shit, that is prodigious! Like winning' a lottery...isn't it? FLAKIER

You are a dumb- piece of shit. What do you finger the government's going to do to me? Take a big wet bite out of my dick head, is what. The other graduate we call- Cunt-n-ham- Oh. Had they not thought that they would tack it and bull piss? The GD kids we get it no me… my old lady said so… do the toll's wrong, they make IRS will make you pay out of your pocket. Freak them! 'OH- Uncle Sam puts his hand down your pants and squeezes your dick until it's freak purple.' Always get the short That's a

fact… I would know said Klit’s. (He spits and then takes a piss on it- over the side of the high viaduct with no sides.) SAM Crying shame. Some cunts got it bad. Klit’s what next is he going to jack it too- the boys how! Some Grandmother- Shit. Sam glances over besides is shocked to see Bradly standing up, listening to the guard's talk. The prisoners keep walking around the steel and downing as asked, eyes on their work and ears on them. STAN- Poor freak. What terrible freaking luck he has. Visualize receiving 1,0000 dollars. -I talk to um- say that is not so-o. SAM- Hey, you nut-o boy? Keep your eyes on your pail and holes and beams! Bradly tosses his hammer to me in the bucket far

in the air- and strolls toward Flackier one foot in front of the other 2,075 feet (about twice the height of the Empire State Building) up. SAM-Bradly! Come back! Shit! What is the… SHIT! Stan-

What is he doing… or what… saying- shit? I said- Getting' himself murdered- that what. Bob- damn it…! Tom- harry- look at us with shock and awe! The guards stiffen at Bradly's approach snapping a clip and a tommie gun at his dick saying a blow it off… another gun was at the other head. Dick's face- hand goes to his holster. The guards CLICK-CLICK’s rifle bolts. Flackier turns, stupefied to find Bradly there. Mr.

Flackier. Do you trust your little girl? That is funny. You are going to look funnier freaking me with that new pussy I will blow into you with this gun. Running on beams we all look- BRADLY. What I mean is, do you think she would go behind your back? Try to F*cking to you? FLAKIER That's it! Step aside, Mate- This toothless mother freak is going to learn how to fly! Flackier- grabs Bradly's collar and propels him violently toward the edge of the ties. The cons angrily keep adding in hot rivets. One goes down a boy's underwire… and he dances. Hot shit- Juss-us! He spoke! STAN- Oh God, he is going to do it, he is going to throw him off the side… Bob- Oh, oh shit freak, oh Jess-

us... if you do trust your baby girl, there is no reason in the world you cannot keep every cent of, that currency for her- if you make it look as if it is for her. FLAKIER You better start making freaking intelligence. Flackier abruptly jerks Bradly to a stop right at the edge. Bradly's past the edge, beyond his balance, shoe tips scraping the last little bit. The only thing between him and an unpleasant drop to the concrete is Flacker's grip on the front of his shirt on the same part of the beam. Give the little girl a trust fund. IRS allows you a one-time-only gift to your child. It is good up to sixty thousand dollars and hide the rest- or give it to your partner. Partner-

my wife you mean- sure… I spoke. Tax-free?

Freaking-A. I do not need any smart wife-killing basted to show me where the shit is in the buckwheat. Get a home- and a car- and more- Income tax-free. I can write it off for you- IRS cannot touch one cent. Go ask the IRS, they will say the same thing. Truly, I feel mindless telling you, I am definite you would have explored the material manually on your own doing. You are the smart hotshot that shot his wife for freaking an older man. Why should I believe you- so- I can squall up in here with you and your gay ass lovers? Oh, that is not nice said- Klit's.

‘Ass lover?’ he said with confusion… Move the others to another place like Canada! And you have it all! It is without any glitches and legal. FLAKIER- those guys a bunch of ambulances- cheating-robbing cocksuckers! I would like to have- a day to see my little girl- and the boys to see their families- for this work- and some shin- on the beam for my friends. ‘he’s got balls’ said Stan… Co-workers! Wow dreaming a lot! That is amusing, isn't it? Flackier halts him with a look. Hey, con I am in! he said- nodding! (I made a friend I said to the guys.) HA!

20

Were done looking over this thing- amazing, no? The convicts stand gaping, all pretense of work gone.

Flackier shoots them a look. FLAKIER What are your jammies staring at? GET Back to work, damn it! SAM You could argue he had done it to curry favor with the guards. Otherwise, make a few supports amongst us cons man. Me, I think he did it just to feel ordinary again... if only for a short amount of time. I and the guys coiled up sitting in a row at ten down the posts 8 a.m., drinking icy cold shin out of jars courtesy of the hardest screw freak, that ever walked the halls of EBENSBURGH State Prison. As before,

an object is hauled up the side of the building by rope- only this time, it is a cooler of beer and shin we sat on the one beam looking down the neat one-point perspective of the posts under the tracks. And that is how it happened, that on the last day of the task, the convict crew of spring of '42... light the sun coming up as high up and drinking- feeling like a free man. SAM- The titanic perforate- of the walls even managed to sound benevolent, we sat and drank with the sun on our shoulders and felt like free men. Sam knocks back another sip, enjoying the bitter cold on his tongue and the warm sun on his face. We were the Member of the aristocracy of all Design. He glances

over to Bradly squatting apart from the others. Stan drifts back to others, giving them a look. He looked at us with his eyes sparking like- as he has seen that we approved. And we did and the first steam train passed as we looked up! A rare shout looking up!

It was said that one of us dug a hole and planted 40,000 under this for if he was able to get free- the tracks ran past where he was going to get out- happen to be the plan- I knew. It would work yet it was risky!

21

Bradly and Sam play checkers. Sam makes his move. SAM- King me.

They are playing checkers- BRADLY- novel writing- Now there is a strategic game... a freaking mystery- it not that hard I could show you- that something I would like to see if you can get me an LC Smith 28 typewriter. I have a book about a girl who has cancer and passed at an early age called HER! Any good- it did okay. You will let me teach you to read and write too then… sure… remember I am the man that can do that for you. I have been thinking of getting some boys together and having class if they are okay with it. SAM- You come to the right place- where I can do that you get that for me and teach you how.

I am the man who can get things, and I am the one that can teach things… deal? Sure… he said with a tittering chatting way. I would love to make a story of how someone would bust out of this place what do you think- I think it will take years- years I have- it is the typewriter I do not. SAM- That'd take you years. BRADLY- Years I have. What I do not have are the pages to use- and the light to see. You will have it if you do this for me. Okay, I am in he- said- Takings here are slim- for writers. Why would you do it? (smiles) I ask a question? …With handshakes- we are friends- I would say so- were becoming…? I suppose so-0. SAM- Bradly? We are getting to be

friends… I presume we are. SAM-BRADLY I am blameless, recall- just like you? Just like every Tom, Dick, and Harry in this gargantuan place. Sam takes this as a gentle rebuff, keeps playing. BRADLY What are you in for, Sam Innocent?? Nope- I did it- and I am not happy for it- I burn in hell I no- for killing all my baby girl's- it was- Manslaughter- I killed my kids- out of a moment of crazy all 10 in the head in there one hay bed- after my lady left me. Same as you- I had sex with them too. All girls under 14, she was white just like you! UM- do not worry those days are gone- and there is not a day where I do not feel the pain of it- what saved me is I was 15 at the time-

and was not thinking right. Mr.- Mr.- I did not mean to do it I said as they hauled me is saying dead man walking! (I did want the hanging- they said to let him rot and think about it.) SAM- The only shamefaced man in Ebensburg and the 30-mile radius. They can get away with it I could not! It for I am black?

Umm? I said… light of the moon is starting to show- in the yard. He pauses, glancing at all the names scratched in the wall. He rises, makes sure the coast is clear, and starts scratching his name into the cement with his rock-hammer, adding to the record. The glare of the radio- the boys are

overhearing the war taking place before the boy band started to practice it was something to do it was time out and takes a seat next to him holding a 1951 Gibson 330 in blue. Oh, how the days just go- fast and yet slow. We find Sam slouched in a folding chair, watching the sound come out its blue's-z. Bradly enters, backlit by the flickering light is rocking to this new sound called rock and roll! Duffie come out of the hole of the wall to get his ass- he was there for doing what he did- I see him and he said he was saving it all up for me. I know. I have seen it three times this month already. Yet they will not kill this man! The entire audience SCREAMS with Duffie holding it out for him to take in and

back in the hole, he went. Yet not long enough! Scream- high-pitched and hysterical. Bradly fidgets. Can we talk about business? Klit's sure would you do this man? Sure- free I would love to. The backroom of the library where I did my writing on a typewriter the paid as you go- 10¢ a page or so- an old con looks over; I like him been here oh back to 1909! Blinking at them through thick bifocals- shaking with his hands- a wealth of intelligentsia. Busted open are the doors- it is DUFFIE- puss out of the hole it has been a week. Take a march- old fart. I must be here, I can walk- far- with help! DUFFIE, I said- freak off- and get. figures loom in the corridor, blocking his path.

Bradly exits the theater and freezes in his tracks. Two dark Rooster and Horrified, the old man darts past me and out the door. And I get my backside investigated! And snaked on… I know. Bradly turns back- and runs right into Duffie's hardness. DUFFIE- Isn't you going to shriek? The instant I have seen it three times already like this… yet how do you stop it other than kill him and add more time to your time. The Allies are on him like a tight young pussy. They kick everything they wanted wide open and drag him into their mind too. And what was more is it was going on with him too. BRADLY- the heater blowers with fans- back by the laundry, and in the back hot

and clanking- I was deep underground- in a rat crap hole. They would never hear me over that. Let us get this over with. Seemingly resigned, Bradly turns around, leans on the rewind curls his fingers around the typewriter foot's licks his lips, pushes past the others, and smacked them all in the face with it. (Ding!) Hoffie's face is dripping blood- and bouncing him bizarre. Freak! Shit! He broke my jaw! Bradly fights like hell but is soon over and forced to his knees. Duffie steps to Bradly pulls out an awl with a vicious eight-inch spike, gives him a good long look at it. DUFFIE Now I am going to open my zipper, and you are going to suck me off bitch for doing this to me, and you

are going to swallow my jizz- And when you are down beating me off for my jaw mine too, he said- with hurt. You going to swallow this one- ton for this bitch fight Hunnie. You broke his nose, so he ought to have something to show for it is his shit in your mouth. I bit the ones off! And the skin of the others- and got the even loving' shit freaked out of me for it! I had a shank my neck what was I going to do- and that is when Stan- walked in with his toothbrush stabbing Duffie in the eye- then pulling it out and doing it in the other… (faint smile I gave to the others they looked at me and ran like little girls.) Duffie flips over the railing and comes sailing, and the Flicker came in and did

the rest of it- not killing but the next thing to it. Directly toward us, eyes bugging out with the brush handing in, SCREAMING as he falls. Bradly lies wrapped in bandages. Bradly spent 3 months in the wing. shooting out from under Duffie and skidding across the room now with smashed bones. wreckage at his feet he turns them right around snapping them up for down. MORT- walks in saying good for you prick this one is for a man on the inside. He got money for him too… or so it was said. G-Damn, Flick.

Look at that sight. Dual things under no circumstances never- ever materialized again after that. The Allies

never laid a finger or anything else on Bradly yet again… and Duff never became exposed again with his scary crystal blue eyes. Duffie, wheelchair-bound and wearing a neck brace, is loaded onto an ambulance for conveyance. …and Duffie never walked again. They moved him to a crazy home with a security infirmary out of state. To my knowledge, he lived out the rest of his days imbibing his nourishment through a clear tub. Where he passed 3 weeks later… from bleeding on the inside. The others were hung- about a year later for other cone takers. Brad needs some lookouts- and a hug when we see him… no… damn straight! I spoke. Bradly, limping a bit, returns from

the infirmary. Working on the tracks it has been 10 years- it was said I need a man- all the same boys now an older man- did the weeding- all but 3 that passed- I see their makers out in the filled. Some make me say- some I am glad they are gone some- I never knew- I feel broke inside. I could run for it I know, yet the chins are holding us back- oh well maybe I happy here. Stan- steeps in-house shit. Despite a few hitches, the boys came through in fine style… all-new tracks in a week ahead of what was said. One man falling in the ties. It was a good ass week- I got new things for the boys- toys we call them… you feel it in what it was. Cigarettes, chewing gum, shoelaces,

underwire- guy things- playing cards with naked ladies- or who sneaked in the back rooms- you name it... I have it for yens. Sam watches from his cell as Bradly is brought up and locked away, this man is losing it I said… softly… thunder overhead looking up at darkness overhead. Bradly finds the cardboard tube lying on his bunk- where he keeps meds to keep the days away.

And then he starts… he starts… The lights go off. Bradly opens the tube and pulls out a large, rolled poster. He lets it uncurl to the floor. Yet stops to look at the pussy he loves so-0! A small scrap of paper flutters out, landing at his feet.

The poster is the famous pin-up- on the airplanes one hand behind her clit a day, eyes half-closed he sighs, sulky lips parted he kiss it will dig her a hole. Bradly picks up a scrap of paper. It reads: ‘No charge. Welcome back.’ Alone in the dark, Bradly smiles… you are just like here- and that is what I love.

22

Heads up. They're tossing' cells. Ernie is mopping the floor. He glances back and sees Warden Marquez approach the cellblock with an entourage of a DOZEN GUARDS. GUARD- dick face- What kind of contraband you hiding in there, the boy in that thing? Nothing look

for yourself- do not look under I was thinking Bradly catches Sam's eye, nods his thanks. As the men shuffle down to breakfast, still mopping, Ernie mutters to the nearest cell: Sam glances into Bradly's cell The BUZZER SOUNDS, the cells SLAM OPEN. Cons step from their cells. Sunlight casts a harsh shadow across her lovely face and perfects the nude body. Word travels fast from cell to cell. Cons scramble to tidy up and hide things. Marquez enters, nods to his men. The guard's pair off in all directions, making their choices at random. Cells are opened, occupants’ emigrant, A GUARD pulls a sharpened screwdriver out of a mattress, items scattered, mattresses

overturned. Whatever contraband is found gets tossed out onto the cellblock floor. Mostly harmless stuff. shoots a nasty look at the CON in authority. FLAKIER Looks clean. Some contraband here, nothing to get in a twist over. Marquez nods strolls to the poster of the nude sexy 17-year-old. MARQUEZ I cannot say I accept this...

...but I understand exclusions can always end. Marquez exits, the guards follow. The cell door is slammed and locked. Marquez pauses, turns back. MARQUEZ- I almost forgot. Here is your bucket back fun stories- I love… remember that- you are here for

forgetting yourself. I would hate to withdraw from this past life you need to see. Redemption lies inside. Marquez and his men walk away. Tossing' cells were just an excuse. Truth is, Marquez sought after scope's Bradly up.

LAUNDRY- DAY (1952) I am-a with Bob. Bob nods, crosses to Bradly, taps him. Bradly turns, Bradly is working the line. Flackier enters and confers briefly removes an earplug. CON Jimmie said- Too damn dark to read down there. MARQUEZ- Add another week for blasphemy and wickedness. Bob shouts over the machine noise: BOB- YOU'RE OFF THE TRACK!

Bradly is led in. Marquez is at his desk doing paperwork. Bradly's eyes go to a framed needle-point sampler on the wall behind him that reads: ‘HIS VERDICT COMETH AND THAT RIGHT SOON.’ MARQUEZ Lonely. A week. Make sure he takes his Bible. The man is taken away. Marquez enters, trailed by his men. Bradly rises. BRADLY- Good evening. Marquez gives a curt nod and winks. Flackier and Trout start tossing the cell in a thorough search. Marquez keeps his eyes on Bradly observing for a wrong glance or nervous blink. He takes the Bible out of Bradly's hand. Marquez's gaze goes up, all the things going on. MARQUEZ- Let us try the second row.

Marquez arrives, makes a thin show of preference a cell at haphazard. He motions at Bradly on his bunk, reading his Bible. The door is unlocked. MARQUEZ- I am pleased to see you reading this. Any favorite passages? BRADLY Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the expert in the house cometh. Read this for me and he did it was a verse out of Jobe.

MARQUEZ, I hear you are good with words and big numbers. How amusing- you think you are smart- if you were not here. And a young lady like the one on your wall would be alive today- what do you say to that? FLAKIER- You winna explain this? Photo- um- what do

you think it is for your sick freak! I get that look for the man- of um- hum. Bradly glances over. Flackier glances at the books lining the windowsill, turns to Marquez, all in his name. FLAKIER- Looks clean. Some contraband here, nothing to get in a twist over. MARQUEZ- Feasibly we can find something more becoming a man of your schooling. Marquez nods strolls to the poster the sexy hot girl! Bradly is led in. Marquez is at his desk doing paperwork- and that is when the plan starts a story- how but 170 in 5 years? Or you go to the hole. Can be done- oh it well- I say so! You are going to make me a famous man… with your weighting see this is God punishing you

for what you did to that sweet little girl. Bradly's eyes go to a framed needle-point sampler on the wall behind him that reads: ‘HIS JUDGMENT COMETH AND THAT RIGHT SOON.’

MARQUEZ My wife made that in church group- she is older, yet I do not do what you do leave one for younger and then kill her to bang yet another. Yes, - sir… It is very pretty, sir. See my kids this one is the age of that girl… winna freak her up too?

No…! MARQUEZ You DON’T like working in the laundry- you bitch so here is your new job- take it? You do not have a

choice. Do you like this? No, sir. Not especially.

23

Darkroom- Bradly's in his bunk, working on a model of the viaduct for his train set. He puts the knight on a chessboard by his bed, adding it to four pieces already there: a king, a queen, and two bishops. He turns to his nude girl in the Moonlight casts bars across her face, yet he is in love. It is a beautifully crafted chess piece in the shape of a horse's head, poise, and nobility in gleaming stone. A series of bleak rooms stacked high with unused filing cabinets, desks, paint supplies, etc. Bradly enters.

BRADLY- I would not say ‘friends.’ I am a convicted murderer who provides sound financial planning. That is a wonderful pet to have you. He hears a FLUTTER OF WINGS. An adult crow lands on a filing cabinet and struts back and forth, checking him out. Bradly smiles. BRADLY Hey, GIRLIE kitten Buttons. Where's HATLEN? HATLEN pokes his head out of the back room. HATLEN Bradly! Though I heard you out here! I have been reassigned to you. Hey, the guard can I get a new frock to look like it was jammed up someone’s ass- HATLEN I know, they told me. Isn't that a kick in the ass? Come on in, I will give you the dime tour. HATLEN leads Bradly into the bleakest

back room of all. Rough plank shelves are lined with books. HATLEN's private domain. HATLEN Here she is, the EBENSBURGH Prison Library- and writing spot. Along with this side, we got National Geographic’s. That side, the Reader's Digest Condensed books. Bottom shelf there, some Ray Bradbury- the new one I like- and Edgar Allan Poe. Every night I pile the cart and make my rounds to the boys. I print the names on this sheet here. Well, that is it. Easy, peas', lemon squeezy. Any questions? In all that time, have you ever had an associate? No, I do not this all down here on my own- there is no grade where I would go really- to GD old for that they say- Bradly pauses.

Something about this does not make any sense. HATLEN? How long have you been a librarian? Since 1910. Yes, about 40 years. BRADLY at no time needed one. Not much to it, is there? So why? Why me at this point? I don't-no. Be nice to have some company down here for a change with a person and not just the cat. FLAKIER- YOU! Yes, you would he posts to himself… another GUARD, a huge person named DICKINS.

That is him the one that can get you a shit load. That is the one- not a babe skew. Flackier exits. Dickins approaches Bradly threateningly. Bradly stands his ground wondering why waiting

for whatever comes next. Finally: Dickins- I am Dickins. I have been, uh, thinking' become a writer also, just like the man up stars- I want your help to get there free- and I give you what you need. Bradly covers his surprise. Glances at HATLEN. HATLEN smiles. Pull down one of their desks there. Someone on the inside… if you are well! I see.

Well. Why don't we have a seat and talk it over? Bradly and Dickins grab a desk standing on end and tilt it to the floor. They find chairs and settle in. HATLEN returns with a tablet with a 50-pound typewriter, has a tough time with it- slides them before Bradly. What did

you have in mind? A weekly draw on your pay? Then if so, you need 4 a year. You are writing I will edit- and it must be a hit… done. He was right. You do not want your money in a bank, keep it at home- What's that going to earn you? That is if your book goes to be sold 55% percent a year of everything that is in the text? We can do a lot better than that- if you hear me out. So, tell me, Mr. Dickins. The story and the length you had in mind, and I say yes or no. Klit’s did not say that! To that man- without getting sucked the freak off. Bob- God is my witness. And MaeDell, he just winks over and over for a few seconds, then laughs his ass off. Subsequently, he shook Bradly's hand and

hugged him. STAN- My hairy ass! HATLEN, he hugged him. About freaking shit, myself. All Bradly needed to be a suit and tie, in a pipe smocking- he would have been the big shot again- if you please. Bob- Manufacturer's yourself some provisions, Bradly. If you want to call it that. I can do more than that.... Ah? SAM- Got you out of the laundry, no? that more than your share here... boy. Nope let us just see... How ‘bout increasing the reading room? Get some new novels in there and a table and some were to sit for an hour or two. With me as the guard- HA! Funny- how you 'expect to do that... ‘I have my ways. HATLEN SI have, I have had seven wardens done time- here for

the period of my term, and I have learned one great immutable veracity of the universe: is not one of 'em been born their pick get short and pucker up tighter than a 10-year-old girl’s pussy after school when you ask for means.’ -How ‘bout freaking a man in the ass? Go to hell… I said- throwing my beard- been there they did not want me that why I am here. He spoke. AMUSEMENT all around. Bradly blinks at them. The chat- I making you money- pay up- what- what did you say to me- not a dime- not a nickel. Still, I would like to try, with your permission, to get money from the outside. I will send a letter a week. They cannot ignore me forever. My budget's stretched thin as of

now. Are you psychic? I see. I could author a story about you freaking me in the ass and see where that goes… the hole I went. I want more walls. More bars. More guards. And you at the end of a rope! And I will be dancing at that! And I piss on your ashes! Like your books, that does not matter, the only one that does it this one here and he slams it into my head- saying get it! They cannot overlook me incessantly. Yes, they can, nonetheless, you write your letters if it makes you content. You pay for it- with your makings… if you get anywhere, I will step in. So, Bradly started writing a letter a week, just like he said he would. Nothing for 5 years. Bradly pops his head

in. The GUARD shakes his head, every day- ha I said so- said the prick… that runs the shitter. NOPE- no answers. The courtyard softball game is being played- team- are playing hard. Tied game… hot sun- it was for blood. Back over white… baseball uniform SMACKS the ball high into left field and races for first. They rescheduled the start of the intramural season to coincide with EBENSBURGH season… for we were the best- and went on to play with the big deals- that do this for a living. It was the cover ball… they said. The Batter sits across from Bradly. The line winds out the door. For the batter up my home run. Sam- and the boys- Got us out of the woodshop a 4

month out of the year, and that was fine by us. I gave a price… Number 19 I was. Sam- 14… Klit runs into the yard, frantic and breathless. He finds Bradly and Sam on the bleachers. Sam? Bradly? It is HATLEN. trying to calm HATLEN, who has Stan in a rush in with Bradly and Sam at his heels. They find a chokehold and a rail spick to his ear. Bob is terrified that he is going to die. C'mon, HATLEN-ie, why don't you just calm them down, okay man? Old man- They want to send me a-way- this is my home… your all are my family. He kicks a table over as he falls out of shock. Tax files explode through the air. What going on? Down here no one saw… You are not fooling anybody, so just

put the damn spick down and stop scaring the shit out of folks. He erupted into tears. The storm is over. Stan staggers free, gasping for air. Bradly takes the knife, passes it to Sam. Falls into Bradly's arms with great heaving tears. You had worse clean out your ears- with a would sick. Aren't you heard? His move meant came through that he was harmless! Old men cracked should be in old age house. Isn't there anything wrong with HATLEN? HHe is just deep-rooted in his ways- in his comfort zone, that is all 60 years, this is all he knows about- with life.

24

The sun rises over the gray stone. HATLEN I can take care of you no more. Her paws- kitten Buttons through the bars. And runs off… and was hit by a car… he later found out. You go on now. You are free my little kiddie. STAN- Institutionalized, my ass.

SAM- Man's been here 60 years. This habitation is all he knows. Here, he is an important man, an educated man. A librarian. Out there, he is nothing but a used-up old con with arthritis in both hands. I could not even get a library card if he applied. Do you see what I am saying? Sam, I do believe you are speaking out of your butt. SAM- Belief

what you want. These walls are humorous. First, you hate um, then you get used to them. After long enough, you get so you depend on them. That's ‘institutionalized.’ KLIT’S Shit. I could never- ever get that way. Stan- Say that when you have been inside if HATLEN has. (tenderly) They send you were for everything you did and take what you did not, the parts that reckon, nonetheless. THE POSTER. Sexy as ever the lower lips wore from kissing them. The rising sun sends fingers of rosy light creeping across her face. HATLEN stands on a chair, poised at the bars of a window, cradling GRILLE kitten Buttons in his hands. The door swings hugely open, revealing

HATLEN standing in his cheap suit, carrying a cheap bag, wearing a cheap hat. TWO SHORT SIREN BLASTS herald the opening of the gate. HATLEN walks out to freedom, tears streaming down his face, said I do not want to go- He looks back. Sam, Bradly, and others stand at the inner fence, seeing him off. The enormous gate closes, smearing them from view. HATLEN is now riding the bus with fear, grasping the seat in front of him, engrossed by the trepidation of speed and motion. And the bus itself… I saw a car, but it was not like these killing things. It is 1969- HATLEN- Dear Fellas. I cannot believe how reckless things move on the outside. …which carries through as

he walks. People and traffic. He keeps looking at the women. An alien species. I look and see women, too, that is the other thing. I forgot they were half human. There are women everywhere, in every shape and size. I find myself semi-hard most of the time, cursing myself for a dirty old man.

TWO YOUNG WOMEN stroll by in short skirts and tank top-shirts have shown boobs and nipples. Baby suck hard on one 14year old girl's nipple! Wow! I said looking around. I saw a pussy out in the open! Run around naked? Who would have to think it? Not a brassiere to be seen, nipples poking out at the world.

Jeez-us, please-us. Back in my day, a woman out in public like that would have been arrested and given a sanity hearing. They are calling this the Summer of Love. Summer of Loonies, you ask me. The park is filled with the young' uncalled HIPPIES. Hanging out. Happening. Here is the source of the music: a radio. A HIPPIE GIRL gyrates to the Beatles, stoned, in her own world. Things got different out here. Lady that rains the home- where they put me- Talk about it. Young punks protesting the war. Do you imagine? Even my own kid. I ought to bust his freaking skull. Guess the world moved on- and gone nuts yet once um I heard about war but never seen it like

this. I see in this box boys being blasted a part of what… I do not get the baby killing. ‘Young people speaking their minds. Getting so much resistance from behind. It is time we stopped, hey, what is that sound? Everybody looks at what is going down. Manly saying wood ray for I sides.’ music today is not Yankee Doodle Dandy- it ‘bout fighting, freaking, and lust- the whole thing going complete bust! Bagging groceries. I saw an automobile once when I was young. Now they are everywhere I look to run my ass over. CHILDREN underfoot. Stilling food and making fun of this old man that not getting it. The kids get swept off by MOM. Sam starts bagging the next customer.

SLOW PUSH IN on Sam. Surrounded by MOTION and NOISE. HATLEN comes trudging up the sidewalk. He glances up as a prop-driven airliner streaks in low overhead. Feeling like the eye of a storm. People were everywhere, whipping around him like a gale. Strange. Loud.

Dizzying. It gets distorted and weird, slow, and thick, pressing in on him from all sides. The noise level intensifies. The hollering of children deepens and distends into LOW EERIE HOWLS. He is in the grip of a major anxiety attack. I fall to the ground passing out… Trying not to panic. Trying not to run. and just laid there… they did not care… some young

girl with her skirt over me took the spot. I got a free show when I came to it. Blinking sweat. He bumps into a lady's cart, mumbles an apology, and keeps going. Breaks into a trot. Kids running down the aisle back like his that he killed back in the 1900s, through the door into the back rooms, faster and faster, running now, slamming- he sees their faces- and they speak to him… through a door marked ‘Employees Only.’ where he slams the door, and leans deeply against it, shutting everything out, breathing heavily. Alone now. Asking to take a leak- He goes to the sink, splashes his face, tries to calm down. He can still hear them out there. They will not go away. He

glances around the restroom. Small. Not small enough. He enters a stall. Locks the door… breaks down- and puts the toilet lid down and sits on the shitter. Better than he was used to. HATLEN enters. The room is small, old, and dingy. An arched window affords a view of Congress Street. Traffic noise drifts in. HATLEN sets his bag down. He does not know what to do. He just stands there, like a man waiting for a bus. He can reach out and touch the walls now. They are close. Safe. Almost small enough. He draws his feet up so he cannot be seen if somebody walks in to look and see if he is going to freak a kid or something in the girl’s room. He will just sit here for a while. Until he calms

down. There was a girl in the room with me but- I am too old for that shit now- even if I would take it, she was about nine years old. That is the shit that got me locked up back then-, yet I knew it would be a way for them to send me back home… nah- she is too cute and sweet blond-haired person, blue eyes baby-talking- I' m-a too old for this… It is challenging work. I try to keep up, but my hands and legs hurt most of the time, not able to stand for long… with leaning on something. I do not think the store manager likes me very much, I would kill that man and not think about it… (Cut) walking home, there is a harsh truth to face, I going to do something to a

young'un at some point I just know it…
No way I am going to make it out here…
without some love- that is all around me.
He pauses at a pawnshop window. An
array of handguns. All I do anymore is
think of a little girl to be with me to break
my given terms of freedom. I am a dirty
old man… I find myself saying yet I never
had it so-o. The parole board got me into
this midway nut house called the earthly
home, and a job bagging grocery at the
market... I am lying smoking in bed
reading some news and freaking out
about that, unable to sleep- the world has
lost it. Terrible thing, to live in fear. I
know it all too well. HATLEN sits alone on
a bench, feeding dogs in the park- I not a

friend out here. All I want is to be back where things make sense. Where I will not have to be frightened all the time- of them me and everything. Most mom and dad at this age think I am monster… yet not so-o. I keep thinking kitten Buttons might show up and say hello, but she never does, oh that right she passed- I hope wherever he is, he is doing okay and making new friends, um oh yes… I load my gun… and take the last blast… at 81 years old I have lived long enough- and do nothing with my life other than waste space. I am a grandpa, that never had that- yet I sick- I am sick… time to face hell! A young WOMAN about 18 leads HATLEN up the stairs toward the top

floor. He has fining with a blast to the head and, these notes for you to get and read on the inside.

24

Klit’s and Seger start swinging picks into the soft earth, quickly ripping out a hole. Sam reaches into his jacket and pulls out a beautiful wooden box, carefully stained and polished. He shows it around to nods of approval. BRADLY- That's pretty, Sam. Nice work. Sam- I have trouble sleeping at night. The bed is too small. I have bad dreams like I am falling. I woke up screaming. Sometimes it takes me a while to remember where I am… in the darkness. The man looks at

me saying what's wrong thinking about what you did- good for you! All that is left of this man is his story I made into a book on my shelf. Bradly reads the letter and now read a book, to Sam and the others: A long silence. Bradly folds the letter, puts it away, and the closing of the book. Softly: He should ‘a perish in here, damn it. Bradly is sorting books on the cart. He replaces a stack on the shelf- and pauses, noticing a line of ants crawling up the wood. We find Bradly, Sam, and the boys working with picks and shovels. He glances up. Is that kitten Buttons? It was- that why he passed over you I said… but I took the cat in. Low hilly terrain all

around. HANDSOME CONS are at work in the Sunflower fields.

GUARDS patrol with carbines, keeping a sharp eye.

They glance over to the pickup truck. Flicker's chewing the fat with Merit and Teckker. A WHISTLE BLOWS.

GUARD- Water break! Five minutes!

Work stops. Cons head for the pickup truck, where water is dispensed with dipper and pail. Sam and the boys look at Bradly. Bradly nods. Now's the period. The group moves off through the misunderstanding, using it as cover. They head up the slope of a nearby hill and quickly decide on a suitable spot.

The guards have not noticed.

STAN- Shovel man in. Watch the dirt.

Stan jumps in and starts spading out the hole. Seger- glances up and sees the men on the slope. What freaking GD shit. Suddenly, other cons start breaking away into groups, dozens of them heading toward the slope. The guards look around.

FLAKIER- What am I talking to myself? Kitten

Buttons, Bradly lays him in the box, followed by Brook's letter. Bradly pulls a towel-wrapped bundle from his jacket and unfolds it. Sam places the casket in the hole. kitten Buttons was just a crow. Neither was much to look at. Both

got institutionalized. See what you can do for 'um. A-men. A moment of silence. Bradly gives Sam an encouraging nod. SAM- Lord gives them a mind. HATLEN was a sinner. ‘a men's all around. The boys shovel dirt into the small gravel and tamp it down. He straight-arms a door and develops into the wall superintending the exercise yard. He leans on the railing, scans the yard, sees Bradly chatting with Sam. FLAKIER- You- What the freak did you do? Your ass, warden's office, now! I got my books and my library- where it was then named the nicest in the state- and I gave boys like- sager their education, young ass- that do not know shit from the shin. Bradly shoots a

worried look at Sam, then heads off. It was just something he loved doing- see kids make it out of the shit pile. Dozens of parcel boxes litter the floor. Raillie, the duty guard, sees through them. Flackier enters, trailed by Bradly. What is all this? FLAKIER- You tell me, freak-dick dipstick! They are posted to you- ass wipe, every ‘Ha’ damn one! The man thrusts an envelope at Bradly. Bradly just stares at it. Here look at this… Bradly takes the envelope, see the money inside saying I got it! In response to surrounded assets for your library project... ‘These sees seven dollars. Flackier glares at him- saying you made more than I at this point. I wonder if I can get more…? Freak- your

mother freaking loves my ass hole, dick sucking- truck muff-pipe love- cum-galloping puss- eater!!! I dropped the book I was holding… I want all this out of this man's office before the warden gets back and see that you made it …did not-like I. Flackier exits. Bradly touches the boxes like a love-struck man fingering a gorgeous woman. Good for you, Bradly. It merely took 15 years. From now on, I send 5 letters a week instead… Alone now, Bradly starts going through the boxes like a starving man exploring packages of records. He rips open another box. This one contains an old phonograph player- looking old that you must hand crank, industrial gray and

green, the words ‘Ebensburg Public School District’ stenciled on the side. The box also contains stacks and stacks of used record albums. He does not know where to turn first. He gets giddy, ripping boxes open and pulling out books, touching them, smelling them. Looking at all the songs he remembers and does not… yet. Bradly reverently slips a stack from the box and starts flipping through them. Nat King, Bing Crosby, etc. playing them all he came a-colored a movie of heartbreaker shots from 1953 up 1963 all 10 years - all of them- were the boys all sat and felt like a free man- in the larger viewing room. Sam- came through yet again… along with a new poster! A sexy

Playboy Playmate misses 1975 with dark hair, green eyes, and short, showing full frontal. Lots of detail on this one! The line was rocking down there… Thanks!

25

Bradly is reclined in the chair, transported, arms fluidly conducting the music. Ecstasy and rapture.

EBENSBURG no longer exists. It has been banished from the mind of men. He slides the Mozart album from its sleeve, lays it on the platter, and lowers the tonearm to his favorite cut. The needle HISSES in the groove... and the MUSIC begins, lilting and gorgeous. Bradly sinks into Tant's chair, overcome

by its beauty it is a thing of beauty. Tant sits in one of the stalls, Jughead comic on his knees. Bradly wrestles the photos player onto the guards' desk, sweeping things onto the floor in his haste. He plugs the machine in. A Sam light warms up. Tant lunges to his feet, pants tangling around his ankles. The platter starts spinning. Tant pauses reading, puzzled. He thinks he hears music. TANT- Bradly? Do you hear that? He works up his courage, then flicks all the toggles to ‘on.’ A SQUEAL OF FEEDBACK echoes briefly... Bradly shoots a look at the bathroom... and smiles. Cons all over the prison stop whatever they are doing, freezing in mid-step to listen, gazing up at

the speakers. Go for him… He lunges to his feet and fences the front door, then the bathroom. He returns to the desk and positions the P.A. microphone…and the -HUE- is suddenly broadcast all over the prison. Through yard… the numbing routine of prison life itself… all grind through just stands in place, listening to the MUSIC, hypnotized… SAM, I tell you, those PHOTOS WHEN farther than anybody in a gray place dare to dream. IT MADE YOUNG LUSTING HOPE COME into our drab little birdcage and made these walls dissolve away… besides for the briefest of moments- every man at EBENSBURGH felt AS IF HE WAS free. It pissed the warden off something abysmal.

Marquez striding up the hallway with Flackier- RIPPING THE FILM OUT THEY DANCED AROUND THE FLAMES. Marquez and Flackier broke the door in. Bradly got 5 weeks in the hole for that little stunt. Bradly looks up with a sublime smile. We hear Tant POUNDING on the bathroom door: TANT- LET ME OUT! LOW ANGLE SLOW PUSH IN on the massive, rust-streaked steel door. God, this is a terrible place to be. Bradly does not seem to mind. His arms sweep hugging himself saying pus- puss- pussy- the movie was playing in his head. STAN Couldn't play something' good, huh? CCR when you were in there the boys headed?

BRADLY- The poverty struck the entrance down before I could take requests. CHUB- Was it worth two weeks in the hole? BRADLY Easiest time I ever took I had photos to look at. STAN Shit. No such thing as an easy time in the hole. A week seems like years. BRADLY- I had Mr. Mozart to keep me company. I hardly felt the time at all. Oh, they let take their nudes down there, huh? I could ‘a swear they confiscated that stuff. BRADLY- (it in my heart, in my head) The music was here... like the photos, and here. That is the one thing they cannot remove, not ever- ever- never.

That is the beauty of it. You love the other side… Haven't you ever felt that way about music or your girl, Sam? You killed your thought…? Nah- I am innocent… just like you! I had played a mean harmonica as a younger man. So did I lose my feeling for it. It did not make much sense on the inside. This hole is where it makes the most logic. We need it so we do not forget about optimism. That there are things in this world not carved out of gray stone with guns your stuff. That does not smell like shit and piss- That there is a small place inside of us they can never lock away, and that place is called optimism. SAM- Optimism is a hazardous entity. It can Enterprise a man

crazy. It has abode now. Well to get used to the inkling. Like HATLEN did?

26

He regards the harmonica as a man confronted with a Martian artifact. He considers trying it out, even holds it briefly to his lips, almost nervous- but puts it back in its box lost in how to play it. And there the harmonica will stay... Sam emerges into the fading daylight. Bradly's waiting for him. He enters, ten years older than when we first saw him at a parole hearing. He removes his cap and sits. slides open with an enormous CLANG. A stark room beyond. SEVEN HUMORLESS MEN sit at a long table. An

empty chair faces them. We are again in: Sam enters, ten years older than when we first saw him at a parole hearing. He removes his cap and sits. It says here you have served 40 years of a 3-life sentence. Do you feel you have been transformed? Yes, sir, without a doubt. I can say I am a transformed man. No danger to humanity, that's God's truth. Rehabilitated. A big rubber stamp slams down ‘PROHIBITED.’ Sam nods, solemn. They settle in on the bleachers. Bradly pulls a small box from his sweater, hands it to Sam. Same old, same old shit new f-n day. Thirty years. Jess-us pleas-us. When you think and say it… where, how, and when. Anniversary gift. Open it. A shiny new gold harmonica

engraved red case. One week later I got in a new gold demand hole DG 335 Gibson, 1977! Something I will be taking with me I thought if I ever get out of here. It is very pretty, Bradly. Thank you. I had to go through one of your challenges. Optimism you do not mind. I wanted it to be a surprise. Are you going to play something? Maybe… Men line the tiers as the evening count is completed. The convict's step into their cells. The control switch is thrown, and all the doors' slams shut THUMP! Bradly finds a cardboard tube on his bunk. The note reads: ‘A new girl for your anniversary. the vagina of the nude front shot of Alicia Silverstone was blown up in even a bigger poster for

the wall- you know the one with the red and white coat- slow his fingers went in there- and the hole was wined... and we find Sam gazing blankly as darkness takes the cellblock. Adding up the months, weeks, days... Bradly was as good as his word. He kept writing to the State Senate. Two letters a week instead of one. Marking them all in the walls… that is when he found the way… Bradly yanks his kerchief down, grinning in exhilaration. Sam and the others follow suit. They step through the hole in the wall, exploring what used to be a sealed-off storage room, lots of shelves going up. Those checks came once a year like clockwork.

27

(Back)

STAN- Treasure Island Robert Louis... Kristi-ie by Stephen King-er that's CARRIE YOU DUMB SHIT! You will love it- it is about a girl like you, that lost her way. Sam and the boys are opening boxes, pulling out books. You would be amazed how far Bradly could stretch it. He made deals with book clubs, charity groups...he bought the remaining Sam books by the pound... I got here an auto repair manual, and a book on soap carving. BRADLY- Trade skills and hobbies, those go under educational. Stack right behind you. Making the

shelves for new library rooms, where the boys were sitting looking over yet something they were proud of I would go to Nassau is the capital and largest city of the Bahamas. It is what… and where? Nas saw… was that at…? That is the place where I would love to spend the rest of my days if I could. It was like living life on repeat 2 years has passed- and the line needs work it was the same name that wanted the job like before… that is where Klits made his run for it… and got so far down the line… to the crossing tracks, and there was an oncoming train- and his foot got stuck, as it switched; and the flying steam train could not and did not want to stop for a con… that rain him as

over-it was later found out the man was for the real innocent of his crimes. Shawshank- what this one- you would like it Kilt's it about busting out- SAM- That should go under… that is how he could the idea. Sounds educational too, is that where I going to put it. Sam is making a sign, carefully routing letters into a long plank of wood. It turns out to be… the polished wooden sign over the archway: 'EBENSBURGH.H' Library.' Revealing the library in all its complete glory: shelves lined with books, tables, and chairs, even a few potted plants. Stan is wearing headphones, listening to May the 'Bard of Paradise Fly up Your Nose!' on the record player singing to it sounding so out of

tune. By the year Jimmy Carter was in donning noting, Bradly had transformed a broom closet smelling of turpentine, and mouse crap into the best prison library in New England. All this work brought in shit loads of dirty cash- oh and there were lots of ways to cover that up and made your fortune. Cheap work- and creep parts- can keep the rail line coming back for this man. SAM- That was also the year Warden Marquez instituted his famous 'Esoteric-Available' program. You may remember reading about it. It made all the papers and got his picture in People magazine. Yet there I was covering it over making it look like grants to the walls. Cutting pulpwood, making ties. repairing

bridges and causeways, with new stronger ones digging storm drains... MARQUEZ... an honest, liberal fee in rectifications and therapy. Our inmates, correctly supervised, have been put to work outside these walls accomplishing all manner of civic service. Cutting pulpwood, repairing bridges and causeways, digging storm drains... along with your passenger railways. The boys listening from behind the fence, as the flashes go off. MARQUEZ- These men can acquire the value of an honest day's labor while on condition that, they are making an appreciated service to the community- and at a bare minimum of expense to Mr. and Mrs. Jane and John, Taxpayer! STAN-

Sounds it out- like railroad-gang', you ask me. SAM- Nobody asked you. A RAILROAD-GANG is grading a culvert with picks. There is dust and the smell of sweat in the air. GUARDS patrol with sniper rifles, a pushy WOMAN REPORTER in an ugly hat bustles up the grade, trailed by a PHOTOGRAPHER. You there…! You men…! A Railroad-GANG is pulling stumps, bogged down in the mud.

We are going to take your picture now! Freak yes! STAN Come' m’ on! We are showing' our tools and grinning' like fools! Take the damn picture! WOMAN REPORTER- You will be in the magazine! And there is the photo- with all the boys'

unzips, reaches inside. The others do likewise, the sight of a dozen men displaying their penises and smiling brightly. Her readers go wobbly, and most must sit down- as they cannot believe their eyes. Working- a man in the sun showing all they have- to the girls looking over from the way. We were something to see the outlaws… sexy- no? I said… about the working- TED a man that was a company owner- that felt like he was being cheated. ‘These preserves, you're going to put me out of the industry! With this backstabbing nig-ger work you got here; you can underbid any independent in the metropolis.’ Marquez opens the box. Alongside the cherry pie is an

envelope. He runs his thumb across the thick stack of cash it contains. Pins are being hammered. A boy is hit with a slug- in mud and blood, pinned by a fallen laying over a sharp tree stump- killed they just thought the body in the woods. The wolf's well gets him the road said- back to work. Men rush over to help him- ‘he’- dead- he said in poor English. Marquez- barely takes notice. You be sure and thank your little girl Jill- that is 10 years old for her fine cherry pie I had. Made just for you… she said… you would get it.

SAM… there was Bradly, keeping the books. Bradly finishes preparing two

bank deposits. Marquez hovers near the desk, keeping a watchful eye.

BRADLY- Two deposits, for the Bank and at First Nash. Night drop, like always. Marquez pockets the envelopes. Bradly crosses to the wall safely and shoves the ledger and sundry files inside. Marquez locks the safe, swings his wife's framed sampler back into place. He cocks his thumb at some laundry and two suits in the corner. Genuinely nice…Want the rest of that? Little girl pussy tastes the same… The little ass tastes like shit, cannot bake worth shit, and cannot freak either, Cherry- it was not that good… Bradly trudged down the corridor with

Marquez's laundry, the pie box under his arm. LIBRARY- Sam- munching on it the girl’s cherry concoction- Umm that the same- how it should be, no- away as he helps Bradly sort books on the shelves. SAM- Got his fingers in a lot of cherry pies, look at the man he eats a lot of them out too- just like you did- from what I hear. - and you end up here… I did not do anything to be ashamed of… What you hear is not half of it. He has frauds and younger girls you have not dreamed of. Bribes on his bribes and babies if they did have the money. That one way to pay the man off… There is a river of dirty pussies running through this place. Money like the girl can be a problem. Eventually, you

got to explain where it came from, that is where I and the boys come in… if ever caught, I take the brunt of it- for not making him what I said I would. That is where I come in. I channel it, funnel it down in play with it, mesh it… stock it found up was to cover their ass as I did with playing with young holes. Then when it comes back… It is clean as a virgin's honey hole that he never- eat out! The money that is… the girls I can say… that… HA! Then behind every sheltered transaction, behindhand every dollar earned… was this man making all the wrongs right… Bradly is at the desk, crunching kindly as he totals up figures on an adding machine. Making that baby

freak shit hips of money. I do it and get life… I no right. The money- Cleaner- the girl I feel for- I have change but that someone little girl. By the time Marquez retires, I will have made him a millionaire. You are like me getting soft he and I should be hard about hearing this. Funny how I must get rid of it I got the kid pregnant said the warden. Here is the money to pay for that too… I spoke. Jesus… They ever catch this, and I will be in here with you mother freaking cock sucker, going to wind up wearing a number like your sorry ass. BRADLY- (smiles) I thought you had more faith in me than that. I do not have faith in anything but that- and points up. UM- I

SAID! Does it ever bother you? BRADLY- I do not run the frauds, Sam, I just process the profits. AND HERE ABOUT THE MONS IN THE NIGHT That's a fine line. I mean I hear them in the office made just for his sex toys with this young'un… wiping the shit out of them, and freaking them so hard you could think the walls would have caved in… But I have also built that library and used it to help a dozen guys get their high school diplomas. Why do you think the warden lets me do all that? I DON'T DO WHAT HE IS ANYMORE… I could have yet would it have been more time added to me for all? SAM- To keep you happy and doing the Washing, clean his come

covered sheets. Add in Money and young girls and you have it all. Maybe- that is not my life anymore… I work cheaply. That is the trade-off- I get paid in getting laid- yet I afraid. YET I feel sick for doing it… HA! I feel it too… yet he is older than both of us. What can you do… right that's- a life- with- a girl- and a- her or another she… that does not matter. I got yah… hot shot ways of life… you think you have it all yet really you have nothing. I have more than him now- I feel. And that is my pride- with hope.

28

SAM- Prison time is slow time. Sometimes it feels like stop-time. So, you

do what you can to keep going... In 1977 JOHNIE WILLIAMS, a damn good-looking kid in his mid-20's. The bus RUMBLES through the gate. The new pussy disembarks, chained together single file. The old-timers holler and shake the fence. A deafening gauntlet. Johnnie and the others are marching naked and shivering, covering with delousing powder, greeted by BOOS and HOOTS. The bars slam with a STEEL CLANG. Johnie and his new CELLMATE take in their new surroundings. JOHNIE Well. Isn't this for shit? DALLYING Johnie as he struts along, combing his ducktail, cigarette behind his ear. (We need The Coasters or Del Vikings on the soundtrack here. Jerry Lee

Lewis.) SAM Johnie Williams came to EBENSBURGH in 1975 on one year for B&E Brick and entering to you all. Cops caught him sneaking' TV sets out the front door of a James way. A SHRIEKING BUZZSAW slices ten-foot lengths of wood. Sam runs the machine while some other OLDTIMERS feed the wood. Young punk, Mr. Rock n' Roll, long hair hippy overconfident freak. Johnie is hauling the cut wood off the conveyor and stacking it, it is a ball-busting job, but the kid's a blur. JOHNIE (slapping his gloves) C'mon there, old boys! Movin' like molasses! Makin' me look bad! The old guy's just grin and shake their heads. SAM- We liked him straightaway. Johnie regales the

old boys with his exploits: JOHNIE ...so I am backing out the door, right? Had a TV like this... Big old' thing. I could not see shit. Rapidly, here is this voice: ‘Sounds like you have done time all over.’ Been in and out since I was 13. Name the place, chances are I been there. What made you come here- the town was a postcard. Anyways back to what I was saying… Halt kid! Hands up in the air! Well, I just stand there holding on to that TV, so the voice says: ‘You hear what I said, boy?’ And I say, yes ass hole, I sure did! But if I drop this freaking object, you got me on the destruction of belongings too! The whole table falls about laughing. The poker game is in progress. Johnie, Bradly, Sam,

and the boys. STAN- You did a stretch in Cashman too. JOHNIE- Yes. That was a comfortable ride, let me tell you. Work programs, weekend furloughs. Not like in here at this dump. It is time you established a new occupation. (The game arcades) What I mean is, you do not seem to be a particularly good burglar. You should try something else that you are good at. JOHNIE- What the hell do you know about it, Eel Capone? What are you in for freaking shit up? Ture! Every Tom, Dick, and Harry were innocent in here. Don't you know that little boy? The tension disruptions like the wind out of his ass easily. Everyone laughs… As it turns out, Johnie had himself a young

girlfriend and new 2 baby girls... Johnie's at the end of the row, phone to his ear. Another side of the glass is Bethany, near tears, fussing with a BABY one sucking hard both on her lap, saying I need you and money step up. PUSH IN on Johnie's face as he listens. Her hand on the mesh of the window they try to hold hands. It was the belief of them on the streets... or his kids growing up not knowing his daddy... that got him to shape up. Whatever it was, something lit a fire under that boy's ass to do the right thing now. Or to just get smarter... Johnie enters, the strut has gone from his step Bradly filing library cards. Saying find a book... and read- or you cannot be here...

he stands there looking at me- dumbly… Thing is, see... (leans in, mutters) I do not read… it- not good. I see well it will work on the way you speak also. JOHNIE- I'm thinking' I should try for high school equivalency. Hear you helped some fellas with that. BRADLY, I do not waste time on retarders, Johnie. I am not that… he said with the look of giving it a chance. Nothing half-assed if we do all this shit… I do not waste my time on doing something for someone where there is no reward out of it. Johnie thinks too long about it, and then he nods unsure of what he agreed to. Read this out of this book- I cannot… I see… Bradly slaps the book shut, immensely pleased with himself- that he

has a new student. Johnnie tries to read as Bradly looks on- dumb shit cannot even read cat and the hat. Bradly shakes his head. Not exactly what I said I would do here boy- you go to school- first and that was it. Bradly chalders the alphabet on a blackboard. How many are there? 30 he said- I look like um-hum! 26! I- Bradly took Johnie under my wing for this all to take place. I- Bradly Started walking him through his ABCs... and 1, 2, 3‘s. Before long, Bradly started him on his course necessities. He liked the kid, that was part of it. Bequeathed him a delight to help a youngster creep off the shit-heap. But that was not the only reason... Discussing the kiddie book- the boy’s face

lights up saying wow. Johnie took it well, too. Boy found intelligence he never knew he had- more in math than any other. None's, verbs, and adjectives… Johnie is strong-minded on a hardback, saying the words. Behind him, wood is piling up on the conveyor belt. After some time, you could not pry those books out of your hands. Something I did not see coming nor did the others like the boys, and the guards also. A smart ass in gear, son! You are putting us behind! Johnie shoves the book in his back pocket and hurries over. Johnie writes a sentence on the blackboard. Bradly steps in to show him how to reconstruct it. Looking around at the Sink, Toilet, Books, Outside the

window bars, we hear another TRAIN passing in the night... You could see that I was about done with my railroad model. were Some fellas collect stamps with girls on them. Others build matchstick houses wishing girls were in them. Or things to use at night- I- Bradly built a library. Now he needed a new project and put my train model in there. Johnie was it. It was the same reason he spent years looking after his- lovers there-- posters on the wall his made-up girlies on the wall... it is to keep your mind… and not lose it like Kilts… would coming up. past a chair, a sweater on a hook... and finally to the place of honor on the wall... I chipped more than just my name on the wall. Through now of

the wall for the first time, I had to see where I was going to go from here… I called down to the work tunnels… where there was a way out or so I thought I just need to bust the bares. I made a fake dummy to put on my bed and Sam looked over. He had no intention of going. He felt like he was not innocent. The vents will work- if they do not get too small for my wide ass- I thought. In prison, a man does anything to keep his mind occupied. I was digging in the night- as I look for freaks- creeping in. where the latest poster turns out to be Alicia Silverstone of 1980. That is a big freaking poster of vagina on your face! Yet I thought it was right and fitting for that day.

Gorgeous, she is. Johnie's taking the big test.

Bradly's monitoring the time. Deep silence, save for Johnie's pencil-scribbling. A few old-timers are browsing the shelves, sneaking looks their way. Johnie tries to ignore them. Concentrate. Bradly clears his throat. Time's up. Johnie puts his pencil down, BRADLY- Well that was it? Well, it is for freak… gets up in disgusted- I Lost a whole freaking year of my life here and with this cow-shit! You did fine- you are doing fine… you do not have many more days to go. May as well be in Chinese or something other than this! I know you did fine. He runs around

going nuts… guard pots him down… with dugs… I said not to panic.

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I feel bad. I let him down. That is shit, son. He is proud of you; you are like our son… were all Proud of you. We have been friends for a long time. I know him as well as anybody. Smart fella, isn’t he? You do not get any more than he… an important thing on the outside. What is he in for anyway? Baby freaking and killing them off… I don’t buy it… oh… 'Bout 2 years ago, I was in Indiana on a 2 to 4 stretch. Spray painted the train in front of the grades- and took the man’s money and shit out of the engine. The dumb-

freak thing to do- yet it was fun. A few months left to go, I got a new cellmate in. Jizzer Latch. Big jittery freaking twitchier. Crazy eyes looking deep in yes. Kind of roomie, you pray you do not get, not knowing it… you know what I am saying… armed freaking babies- burglary. And ass freak- too- get that… all kinds of hand jobs. Hard to believe, high-strung as he was. Rip a loud fart, he would go 5 feet up in midair. Talked shit all the time, too, that is the other thing you did want to do it as too much or too less. Never shut the freak up. Places he had been, jobs he pulled, little girls he freaked- boys too. Even people he killed- for the fun of it. Folks that did not come for him- or the

other way round, cun-ts he called them all- that is how he put it. One evening, like a tale, I say I freaking some young puss you- I say: ‘Yeah? Who'd you kill doing it?’ So, he says… I got me this job one-time working tables at a nightclub- see all the girls wiggle and shit, it was in the 30s so- it was illegal… yet I could case all these big rich pricks that come in. I pick out this guy with this tight ass puss with him, go in one night and do his place, and here… I changed my name, and she falls for it… dumb bitch… though I had money. I freaked her and then I killed her doing it the second time around… and freak after she was cold. A tasty bitch it sucking he said. (He starts laughing and cannot stop

it was so freaking creep.) The best skew I ever had- she was so young- and right… Do me and shit. That is the best part! She is freaking me hardcore, and I pop her full of lead in the head. Yet the best part she married to some hotshot… and looked in at us… and he is the one the nail it on. Laughter makes my skin claw- and buggy. The evil in this man's eyes was chilling.

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I loved her… I guess I could not show it enough… She was gorgeous… BRADLY- My wife used to say I am a hard man to get to know. I did not pull the trigger. But I drove her away. That is why she died. Because of me, the way I am-

never happy with what I have or had. Like a closed book you do not want to read for the cover. They criticized me for it all the time she could. I killed her, Sam… not love her the right way. (Softly he said this.) Bradly finally glances at Sam, seeking a reaction. Silence. That does not make you a murderer. Bad husband, that all a sinner too yet we all are. Bradly smiles faintly despite himself. Sam gives his shoulder a squash. No. I did not. Someone else did, and I wound up here. Bad break, I conjecture. Feel debauched about it if you want. It floats around. Must land on somebody. Say a storm comes through. Some folks sit in the living rooms and enjoy the rain. The house next

door gets torn out of the ground and smashed flat. But you did not pull the trigger, you just were not there but you did what you thought was right at the time. No- not even… I said back. When I got a long white beard and about three marbles left rolling around upstairs. Jesus Bad fortune? It was my turn, that is all. I was in the path of the twister. (Softly he said) I just had no idea the storm would go on if it had. (Glances to him with the look of going mad) Think you will ever get out of here? SAM Sure. I said where I would go- I just might- one of these lost & lonely nights… if only in my mind… like a trip.

Some Diminutive place right on the Pacific. Do you know what the Enchanted Islands…say about the Pacific? They say it has no recollection or readmission. That is where I would like to finish my life, Sam. A warm place with no remembrance. Open a little hotel right on the beach. Buy some worthless old boat and fix it up like new. Take my guests out charter passing. (Beat…) You know, a place like that, I would need a man who can get things. Sam stares at Bradly, laughs. SAM Jesus, Bradly. I could not hack it on the outside. Been in here too long. I am an institutional man now.

Like old Hatlen was. You misjudge yourself, I said to him. SAM Bullshit. In here I am the guy who can get it for you. Out there, all you need are Yellow Pages. I would not know where to begin. (Derisive snort) The Pacific Ocean? Hell. Like to scare me to death, something' that big. You are right. It is down there, and I am here. It comes down to a humble sanction. Become full breathing hard and heavy or get busy taking the last breath. BRADLY- Not me. I did not shoot my wife and I did not shoot her lover, and whatever mistakes I made I've paid for and then some. That hotel and that boat... I do not think it is too much to want. To look at the stars just

after sunset. Touch the sand. Wade in the water… Feel free. damn it, Bradly, stop! Do not do that to yourself! Talking shitty shit dreams! The Bahamas is over there, and you are in here, and that is the way it is! It used to it; Sam snaps a look. Sam lunges to his feet. What does that mean? Bradly rises and treads away. Bradly? (Turns back to give that last loving look.) Sam, if you ever get out of here, do me a favor. There is this big sunflower field up near Nicktown. Do you know where Nicktown is? Lots of Sunflower fields there. One in the individual that I love- that we loved- it has a long creak running by it… with an old home that was falling in over the way… wall with a big oak at

the north end. Like something out of a Marcel Ray Duriez Book. It is where I asked my it have sex with me… ‘So beautiful,’ she breathed. ‘Mm, and the view’s not so bad either,’ he said. She turned around to face him, rolling her eyes. She tucked her fingers into the front of his pants, admiring his strong jawline as he wrestled the cork from the bottle. Even if she always managed to open them more easily, it was all about these little traditions. ‘You make that joke every time.’ ‘And I still mean it. Even when you roll your eyes around like that. But now that I have torn your eyes away from the beautiful night sky, may I interest the lady in some champagne?’ She closed her

eyes and lifted her gaping mouth expectantly, bracing for the sharp sweet tang of the bubbles in her mouth.

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With a final squeak and a pop, he tossed the cork aside and gave her his best Sarah Connery eyebrow raise- she was my girl. Instead, a few drops hit her lips while a steady stream hit her chin and ran down her chest, soaking the top of her blouse. ‘I seem to have forgotten the glasses, my dear girl. You’ll have to open wide.’ ‘Brad!’ she wheezed, forgetting for a moment to whisper. ‘On it, miss. Many apologies: can’t imagine how that happened.’ Without missing a

beat, he began unbuttoning her shirt and noisily kissing and licking his way from her collarbone to her sternum. Down he followed the middle of her petite frame, now shaking with laughter until he was on his knees at her feet. She clasped her hands behind his head and looked down into his large brown eyes, which looked more mischievous than usual. ‘Well, jeez, now that I’m all wet,’ she began, bending—with just a little—to join him on the ground. ‘Wait for just a sec.’ He reached among the blankets and pulled out a small black box. Placing the champagne down, he flicked the open box and held it up for her. ‘I’ve got something I’d like to propose. ’In the poor light, all

Caroline could see within the box was a thick gold band. ‘Brad,’ that is not a ring, is it? You remember that we’re married, right?’ ‘While I would marry you again 50 times over, no, this isn’t a ring.’ He looked down and began fumbling with the box. ‘Just let me turn it on…’ He held it up triumphantly as it began buzzing. ‘Someone has been leaving their browser open. I can take a hint.’ ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about,’ she started, pulling up her skirt. ‘Mm, is that so? Hmmm,’ he murmured; mouth muffled against her soft inner thigh. With both arms cupping the back of her legs, he continued to voice his disbelief; first along her left thigh, across her delicate cleft,

and then back down the right. Jutting his chin firmly under her, he looked up into her eyes, half-closed with pleasure as she leaned against the wall and held onto the back of his head with her other arm. ‘After a thorough investigation, I have to find your claims of innocence to be completely spurious ma’am.’ ‘Shuh. Shut up,’ she laughed and pushed his head gently back toward her. His tongue obliged, flat and pushing forward along her, then curling back as he pulled it upward to her clit. She shivered and placed a knee on his shoulder as he delved forward and back, each time pausing longer to suck gently as she moaned and squirmed in his grasp. With

the tapered edge of the toy, he began entering her shallowly, each time letting it linger for just a half-second longer. ‘Please,’ she said, grasping at his hair with no longer gentle tugs. Obliging, he bit gently at her thigh while inserting it and admired the glint of gold against her tawny skin. He stood, his fingers pressing it in place from within and watched as she writhed against the vibrations. She pulled him close; leg lifting in his grasp to urge him deeper. Promise me, Sam. If you ever get out, find that spot. In the base of that wall, you will find an old car here inside you will get what you need… what is in this 55 Chevy. You will find something buried in the set… under it I want you to

have it what we had. With her other hand, she fumbled around him to undo his belt, grimacing in frustration. He chuckled and released her, undoing his belt slowly as she explored sensations of the toy against herself. She flicked her eyes at his cock, an invitation, and a challenge. With a loose grip, he ran his hand up and down his shaft, enjoying his show as much as being hers. ‘Turn around,’ his voice now hoarse with want rather than an effort to be quiet. She gave a slow, mocking turn and stuck her ass out at him, using her hand now to grind against the vibe with a slow, deliberately taunting. He stepped toward her and lifted her hips, entering her so hurriedly he barely registering her

deepened moan. Each thrust sent shock waves down the underside of his cock and throughout his entire body. Their left arms intertwined on the top of the ledge, using it for leverage as their right hands both clasped at her cunt. wife to marry me. We had gone for a picnic. We made love under that tree. I asked and she said yes. You remember being that age.’ ‘Barely!’ Their guffaws faded and Brian kissed Caroline’s neck. ‘They’re right you know. We’re acting like kids.’ What? What is in there? You will just have to pry up that and see. Bradly turns and walks away. Lost in Silence….

Johnie has finished his story. Sam is stunned…but Bradly looks like he has been smacked with a two by four or it was off his ass the look of pain man. Walks stiffly away. Does not look back. Well. I have to say, that is the most astonishing story I ever heard. What amazes me most is you were taken in by it yet not me. Said- MARQUEZ… all together… in-between the shelves. I said back… MARQUEZ- It is obvious this fellow Williams is impressed with you. He hears your tale of grief and quite naturally wants to applaud you up with his made-up stays. He is undeveloped, not bright. Not surprisingly he did not know what state he had put you in. BRADLY, he is telling

the truth. MARQUEZ Let us say for a moment man is real. You think he'd just fall to his knees and cry, ‘Absolutely, I did it! I confess! Please add 3 life terms to my sentence!’ It could help… Well, it is a chance. isn't it? How can you be so simple-minded? What did you call me…? I was just trying to rest your mind at ease, that is all. Thickheaded if you well! Is it deliberate? The club will have its name on and resets that on them! If you want to ponder this make-believe, that is your business. Do not make it mine. This meeting's over. Look, if it is the squeeze, do not worry. I would never say what goes on here. I would be just as prosecutable as you for laundering the money and

having the girls! Do not you ever mention money or girls to me again, you repentant freaking bitch! Not in this place of work, not anyplace! Get in here! Now! 3 graduates drag him off to the hole where he rioted for 5 weeks…Bradly gets dragged away, kicking, and screaming like a newborn: Don't you understand it is my life? I could get out or less time. Mail call. Men crowd around as names are called out. Sam and the boys are parked on the bleachers. CHUB and Clef- say 3 months in the hole. The longest damn stretch I ever heard of. JOHNIE- It is my fault for saying shit. SAM- Like hell. You did not pull the trigger, and you did not convince him, did you know, so do not

think about it. STAN- Sam? Are you saying Bradly's innocent? I mean for the real innocent. (Sam nods and looks at me) Sweet baby Jesus. How long is he been here? 30 years. Numb-nuts you have mailed the graduate said. Board of Education. I mailed it to you both… You going to open it or rub yourself off a little more… rub sound better. I do not want to see this… hey, look at this you out high marks. FOOTSTEPS approaches slowly to see the girl sitting there. Johnie makes his way through the chaos, finds Beth and the baby waiting behind the thick plexi shield. He sits, does not pick up the phone. Just stares at Beth. She does not know what to make of it. He presses a piece of paper

against the glass. A high school diplomas. Her face lights up, blinking back tears. The steel door. Somewhere behind it, unseen is Bradly, A rat scurries along the wall. Bradly listens in darkness. The FOOTSTEPS pause outside his door. The slot opens. An ELDERLY GUARD peers in. An OLD GUARD Kid passed the big time. B+- above average.

Alleged you would like to know this happy for your boy.

The slot closes. The FOOTSTEPS recede. Bradly smiles. We find Johnie on evening work detail, mopping the floors with bucket and pail. Warden wants to talk. A steel door rattles open. Mert leads

Johnie outside to a gate, unlocks it. Johnie ensues out across loading-dock access for the shops and mills. Some vehicles parked. The place is deserted. He stops, sensing a presence. Johnie looks around. Here… outside the walls? The gate opens, sends Johnie through, turns, and heads back inside. Warden? Marquez steps into the light out of the black darkness. MARQUEZ- I give you a girl in here to keep you from talking… we have a situation here. I think you can appreciate that if you had your girl once and a while… I would but no… he said… it is not right I am a changed man. He said- this came along and bashed my wind out of me. MARQUEZ- I tell you, son, it has me

up nights knowing this is wrong, that is the God truth. MARQUEZ- The right decision. Sometimes it is hard to figure out what that is… you say no, so I make it for you- you comprehend that? (Johnie nods) Think hard, Johnie. If I am going to move on this, there cannot be the least little sh-Sam of the doubt. Would you be willing to swear before a judge and jury…having placed your hand on the Good Book and taken an oath before Almighty God Himself? Just give me that chance… do the right thing and no- I have my girl. She will be mine if you keep saying shit. I must know if what you told him was the truth. Marquez pulls a pack

of cigarettes, offers Johnie a smoke. Johnie takes one.

Marquez lights both cigarettes pocket his lighter.

Yes, sir. He said with nerves. That is what

I thought. Marquez drops his cigarette. Brushes it out with the toe of his shoe. Glances up toward the plate shop roof as a go-through scope pops up into the frame, jumping Johnie's image into startling intensification, framed in the crosshairs. Rapid fires a carbine- BAM! BAM! BAM! bam! his face lit up by the muzzle flashes. Captain Flackier. gets chewed to pieces by the gunfire. He

smacks the ground in a twitching, thrashing heap. Eyes wide and staring. Dead. Surprise still stamped on his face. Silence now. Marquez turns strolls into darkness. Dumb freak…GUARDS approach Bradly's cell. The door is unlocked. Bradly emerges slowly, blinking painfully at the light. Bradly has marched along. Convicts stop staring. Bradly is led in. The door is closed. Alone with Marquez. Softly… BRADLY- I am done. It stops right now. Get H&R Block to declare your income. MARQUEZ- creep-creep- creeping away- like a snake in the night- like your ass hole of a boyfriend, he freaks you and is done. Terrible thing. Man, that young, less than a year to go,

trying to escape. It Broke Captain Flacker's heart to shoot him, truly it did. Marquez lunges to his feet, eyes sparkling with rage. As he looks at this man part naked in his hole… bared in his shit. NO- I do not think so-0. Otherwise, you will have the hardest time there is in this place. No more protection from the guards. I will pull you out of that one-bunk Hilton and put you in a padded room with all the dick suckers… like all the biggest bull queer I can find. ‘You'll think you got freaked by a runaway night train!’ And the library? Gone! Sealed off brick by brick! We will have a little book barbecue in the yard! They will see the flames for miles! We will dance around it like

uninhabited Indians! Do you comprehend me in my mindless ways? Are you catching my drift… or are you the dumb ass? Bradly's face. Eyes tunneling. His beaten appearance says it all… Sam finds Bradly sitting in the shadow of the high stone wall, poking lethargically through the dust for small pebbles. Sam waits for some acknowledgment. Bradly does not even lookup. Sam hunkers down and joins him. Nothing is said for the longest time. And then, softly: I tell you, the man was talking' crazy. I am worried, I truly am. He said to the boys.

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We ought to keep an eye on him. KLIT’S That's fine, during the day. But at night he has that cell all to himself. STAN Oh Lord. Bradly comes down to the loading dock today. Asked me for a length of rope. 4foot long. Do you think he is going to? clef Shit! Did you give it to him? End it yah… STAN Sure I did. I mean why wouldn't I? CHUB Remember what happened to Dick.

STAN How the hell was I supposed to know? KLIT’S

Bradley's never done that. Never. They all look to Sam. SAM Every man's got a breaking point. Report to your cell blocks for evening count. BOOM DOWN

to Sam and the boys. Convicts drift past them. CHUB Where the hell is he? STAN is Still up in the wardens.

TOWER GUARD (via a loudspeaker) YOU MEN! YOU HEAR

Is THAT ANNOUNCEMENT OR ZEST TOO STUPID TO UNDERSTAND? CHUB Nothing, we can do. Not tonight. STAN Let us pull him aside tomorrow, all of us. Have a word with him. Isn't that right, Sam? SAM (disbelieving) Yeah. Sure. That is right. Bradly's working away. Marquez pokes his head in. Bradly finally gets his head through, scraping his ears. He has a penlight clenched in his teeth. He peers down into the shaft. At

the very bottom, 50 feet down, a big ceramic pipe runs the length of the cellblock. Beneath its coat of grime and dust, the word ‘SEWER’ is stenciled.

MARQUEZ Lickety-split. I want to get home. BRADLY

About done, sir. BRADLY Three deposits tonight. We follow Marquez to his wife's sampler. He swings it aside, works the combination dial, and opens the wall safely. Bradly moves up, shoves in the black ledger, and files. Marquez shuts the safe. Bradly hands him the envelopes. Marquez heads for the door. MARQUEZ Get my stuff down the laundry. And shine my shoes. I want 'em looking' like

mirrors. (Pauses at door) Nice having' you back, Bradly. The place just was not the same without you… Marquez exits. Bradly turns to the laundry. He opens the shoebox. Nice pair of dress shoes inside. He sighs, glances down at the old, ragged pair of work shoes on his own feet. Bradly is diligently shining Marquez's shoes. Bradly trudges down the hallway, laundry slung over his shoulder, Bradly nods to the GUARD. The guard BUZZES him through. Sam hears Bradly coming, moves to the bars. He watches Bradly come up to the second tier and pause before his cell. Open number 14! Bradly gazes directly at Sam. A beat of eye contact. Sam shakes his head. Do not do

it. Bradly smiles, eerily calm...and enters his cell. The door closes. KATHUMP! We held on to Sam's face. Bradly is polishing a chess piece. Lights out! The lights bump off. He finishes polishing, holds up the piece to admire. A pawn. He sets it down with the others -- and we realize it is the final glance for the board. A full set. He gazes up at Raquel and smiles. Pulls a 4-foot length rope from under his pillow. Let us uncoil to the floor. Brad- hopped a train to his freedom- along with getting his cash under the viaduct! Along with all the money he made for the warden and the guards... along with making it a book!

32

Suddenly, a palm-sized chunk of cement pops free and hits the floor, that is when he knew it was possible. He stares down at it. Bradly lies in the dark, studying the chunk of concrete in his hands. Considering the possibilities. Wrestling with hope. Bradly stands to peer at the small hole left by the fallen chunk. Carefully runs his fingertip over it. Mining is the study of force and phase. That is all it takes. Force and phase. That and a big damn poster, on the wall, showing the way into her hole- of freed and joy! HA! Sam sits in the dark, a bundle of nerves, trying to hold himself still. He feels like he might scream or shake to pieces. The second's tick by,

each an eternity. I have had some long nights in the stir. Alone in the dark with nothing but your thoughts, time can draw out like a blade... A FLASH OF LIGHTNING outside his window sends harsh balsam shadows jittering across the cell. A storm breaking. That was the longest night of my life... the last night I saw my friend. HAIG Brad, dammit, you are putting me behind! You better be sick or dead in there, I shit you not! KATHUMP! The expert lock is thrown. The cons emerge from their cells and the headcount begins. Sam looks back to see if Bradly's in line. He is not. Suddenly the count stalls: GUARD Man missing on tier two! Cell 12! The head bull, HAIG, checks

his list: Brad? Get your ass out here, boy! You are holding up the show! (No answer) looking at the dummies…Don't make me come down there now! I will thump your skull for you! Still no answer. Glaring, Haig stalks down the tier, clipboard in hand. His men fall in behind. They arrive at bars. Their faces go slack. Stunned. Softly: Digging muddy tunnel 700 yards that lead into a shit toenail that was another 500 to freedom get this next to the courthouse, out of a utility access hole cover, also that sent him there in the first place. Right outside the doors, he popped up like a rat in the snow covertness of the night in white. Using nothing but a sharpened toothbrush with a melted razor

blade on the blunt end the color Sam. The warden though one of his collectibles mouth organs through the Sam head poster funny hitting and going through the vagina of the nude front shot of Alicia Silverstone- you know the one with the red and white coat- slow his fingers went in there- and the hole was whined. The train takes him away off hop-off gets the cone to hope back on in the next passing one to his place in the Brahmas. Where I would blow all the warden's money! Oh, my Holy God. reveals the cell is empty. Everything is tidy. Even the bunk is stowed. They wrench the door open and rush in, tossing the cell in a panic as if Bradly might be lurking under the

Kleenex or the toothpaste. spins toward us, bellowing at the top of his lungs: WHAT THE FREAK! Marquez is kicking back with the morning paper. He notices how dingy his shoes are. He glances at the shoebox on the desk. kicks his shoes off, opens the box -- and gulls out Bradly's o grimy work shoes. He stares blankly. What a freak indeed. An ALARM STARTS BLARING throughout the prison. He looks up. Marquez and

Flackier stride across the grounds, ALARM BLARING.

MARQUEZ, I want every member of staff on that cellblock questioned! Start with that friend of his! FLAKIER who?

Sam watches as Marquez storms up with an entourage of guards. MARQUEZ Him. Sam's eyes widen. Guards yank him from his cell. Marquez steps to the center of the room, working himself up into a fine rage: What do you mean ‘he just wasn't here?’ Do not say that to me, Haig! Do not say that to me again! Look at this thing look real to you- I think not! But sir! He was not! He is not! MARQUEZ I can see that, Crate! Do you think I am simple-minded? Is that what you are saying? Am I a dumb ass? No sir! Marquez grabs the clipboard and thrusts it at Flockier. What about you? Are you blind? Tell me what this is! FLAKIER Last night's count. MARQUEZ You see Brad's name? I sure

do! Right there, see? ‘Brad.’ He was in his cell at the lights went out! NO reason he would still be here this morning! I want him to be found! Not tomorrow, not after breakfast! Now! MARQUEZ Well? SAM Well what?

MARQUEZ, I see you two all the time, you are close, you are! He must ‘a said something! SAM No sir, he did not! Marquez spreads his arms evangelist-style, spins slowly around. MARQUEZ Lord! It is a miracle! Man, up and vanished like a girl you just freaked and dumped the same night! Nothing' left but some models and books on the windowsill and that nude young freaking pussy

showing on the wall! Let us ask her! She knows! What do you say there, Fuzzy-Britches? Want to talk? Guess not. Why should you be different? Sam exchanges look with the guards. Even they are nervous. Marquez scoops a handful of rocks off the sill. He hurls them at the wall one at a time, shattering them, punctuating his words: MARQUEZ It is a conspiracy! His hands- throwing (SMASH- a model train) That's what this is! (SMASH a train car that he made from wood) It is one big damn conspiracy! (SMASH- a boxcar) And everyone is in it! (SMASH- a little water tower) Including her! He sends the last rock whizzing right at the nude girl on the wall. Right for the

hole… smash- you could not hit that hard if you were a 16-year-old boy on his first lovemaking. It takes a moment for this to sink in. see this tight ting go all wide… All eyes go to her new hole that was made. The rock went through her puss. You could hear a pin drop. Marquez reaches up, sinks his finger into her dark young-tight freak hole. He keeps pushing... and his entire hand disappears into the wall. I find self-drilling at the sight of this… slowly fingering this girl he was… as Marquez rips the poster from before our eyes. Stunned faces peering in his head went up all in there. to reveal the long crumbling tunnel in the wall. That leads to an underground tunnel- then to the shit

passageway- then up a manhole- then out by the courthouse, next to the tracks that he walked along- it was snowing in the night love agent the flicker lights- you can see him- there looking up… hands up praying and thankful for his freedom, moving fast he runs for the oncoming train- then jumps off a viaduct where he digs up his lout… and under there he stays for the next train for the next town… where he could get clean and start a new look and life… as a new man… He took Jonie's name he was going to be out soon anyway- it was not yet reported… so by the time, it got out it was too late… a guard barely out of his teens tried not to look nervous as they lash a rope around

his chest. He is getting instructions from six different people at once. (Flashlight in his hands) looking in He reaches for the opposite wall, manages to snag a steel conduit with his fingers. Suddenly, a huge rat darts for his hand. Bradly yanks away and plummets head-first down the shaft. He dangles wildly upside-down for a moment, arms windmilling, then gets his hands pressed firmly against the opposite wall. The rat scurries off, pissed, at the lining of the walls… wet and drizzling with moisture- the small of metal like- The warden went down in the hole. Um- freshly opened! He was not much in the brains department at this point we could see that, but he possessed feeling up the

hole… like a hard dick sliding in a new hole made… with a teen bitch, it was sore and tight squeezing…he was willing to go deep down inside. squeezes down the tunnel on his belly. Dark as midnight. Concrete walls rise on both sides. If you imagine them as two huge flaps on either side- you would get what I am saying- do deep to come out of, no is in this space hardly, and a dark tangle of pipes between the cellblocks was starting to get hot. Somewhere, a rat SQUEAKS, someone flushed- a shitter and that is when… Smells damn bad, Warden!

It smells just like shit. It is SHIT- it is poppies! Ah god- the man up there

said- I giggled my ass off! squeezes from the tunnel, we made the same trap as he did out and up! Showing what it was like- when he did and when numb nuts did it too. The fat ass barely got in the dumb hole! He lost his glass doing this- it was that hard of a freak for him. Into the shaft, he went- the feeling is- nothing but darkness and a small light at the end good this must be with it like when you come out- I just do it backward. Not having an enjoyable time, squeezing through the walls of this passageway. Never mind dumb shits keep going, I said! Just keep going! I want him found he may be down here… Flicker and the warden sink in all the shit lining the

tunnel. That when they got blasted with a big wave of shit- in the face… He slips and sits heavily in it. Brad got the last chuckle! Small my ass! The boys said on top! The ladyboys were having an enjoyable time with this one. Sam- He starts laughing. Laughing, hell, he is bellowing laughter, laughing so hard he must hold himself, laughing so hard tears are pouring down his cheeks. The look of rage on Marquez's face makes him laugh all the harder. Abrupt silence- I lost it- one for him get away with shit and for his shit hitting in the face… it was a win-win… and that was good shit! Shit! I laughed myself right into madness- the boys loved it though. I knew I did not

want to piss them off- for I was hoping to get out… SAM Its shit, its shit, oh my God- it is shit- he fingers her pussy- and shit... then a boy said (then shot himself because!) HA! He starts laughing all over again, fit to split. (That IS the tightest one he ever got!) Virgin landscape THIS WAS. FUNNY IT WAS ALL THE SAME TO HIM TOO.

33

Charming rural road. Suddenly, State Police Cruisers rocket up the road with SIRENS AND LIGHTS. In 1991, Bradly Brad escaped from EBENSBURGH Prison. At age 69… EBENSBURG is half a mile distant from where he got out. All

that was left behind was a prison uniform by the creek under the viaduct with and body wash. as well as a coal miner's- hammer with the pick side damn near worn down to the handle. And a miner’s orange hard hat with a lamp! Cops all over the town and around- posing with Bradly's reeking uniform and the worn rock-hammer the photo made the papers- and news. Bradly loved working underground. I fancy it fascinated him in his strategic ways. A dying tree here- aging there, a million liars there of mountain making- under pressure, seems there- clay there... I remember thinking it would take a man 1000 years to tunnel through the wall and underground with it.

Bradly did it in about 50. And the dumb got the last laugh too for it was that good… I keep an eye out yet it dark- and that was when he did his work 6 hours at a time… and the rest was sleep and eat. Like I said. In prison, a man will do no matter what to keep his awareness busy, and not go stir-crazy. All the shit was pushed down in the hole as he dug- or was in the coal bucket. While the rest of us slept, Bradly spent years working the night shift… SAM-I guess after Johnie was killed, Bradly decided he had been here too long. And he had his name and plan made…

The lights went out. Bradly places the last chess piece. Gazes up at his girlie. Smiles. Pulls the rope from under his pillow. He stands and unbuttons his prison shirt, revealing Marquez's gray pinstripe suit underneath in wild shadows you see his face looking crack in the moment of busting out and though. The storm rages, outside- sown- is the cover of night- Bradly, goes in his girl, carefully having one of Marquez's folded suits into a large industrial Zip-Lock bag- that he had in the shaft the day before. Bradly, again wearing prison clothes, inches down the tunnel.

Bradly squeezes through the hole head-first, just imagine that, and the tape on the top is what covers the hole over. Yet the wind would bubble it up, yet he knew in the dim light it would not be known. Bradly snags the conduit again. He contorts out of the hole and dangles into the shaft. We now see the purpose of the rope, he kicks his legs across the shaft and down, getting his feet braced for the big drop. His back against one wall, and feet against the other, he starts down the shaft. Sliding dangerously. Using pipes for handholds. Flinching as rats dart this way and that, scurrying in the shadows. He drops the last few feet to the bottom. He approaches the ceramic

sewer tunnel and kneels before it. No turning back. He wriggles into the pipe and starts crawling. Bradly crept to freedom through Mud- muck and bloody shit stinking filth I cannot even visualize. Or mayhap I just do not want to do so-0. Snow is falling- EBENSBURGH is a mile and a half distant or so away. Freedom- as he made past the courthouse, that convicted him to this life sentence. He wades upstream, ripping his clothes from his body. He gets his shirt off, spins it through the air over his head, flings the shirt away. He raises his arms to the sky, turning slowly, it is 32 out yet he was more than happy in this… feeling the snow coating him clean. Jubilant and

Successful he felt. SAM- The next day… a man nobody ever laid eyes on before marched into the first national Bank of Johnstown. The only thing that changed was that he was John Sr. on paper. I would like to withdraw all my earnings… as this man here… the same name he uses to make the warden what he was… worked. The signature was a spot-on match with the photos. Makeup and hair- can do a lot- I thought. And a Pillow in my pants under this nice site. He had all the proper… license, birth certificate, social security card, it was all there. I must say I am sorry to be dropping your industry. I hope you will enjoy living out of the country. She never said a word- to

anyone. I was just some man… Thank you, I said with a smirk. Cash in hand- I walked out… smelling… foolishly. I mailed my manuscript book to the new paper- and was on my way. It was typed- with a pen name… that was that- the name J. B. W.

34

Marquez walks slowly toward his office. Dazed. The morning paper in his hand. He goes wordlessly past the DUTY GUARD into his office. Shut the door. Lays the paper on his desk. The headline reads:

‘VENALITY and young rapping AND MANSLAUGHTER AT EBENSBURGH.’

Below that, the sub-headline: ‘D.A. Has Ledger.

Indictments Expected.’ Marquez looks up as SIRENS

SWELL in the distance. For the second time, State

Police cruisers go rocketing up the road with SIRENS AND LIGHTS. Police cruisers everywhere. A media circus. REPORTERS jostle for position. A colorless DISTRICT ATTORNEY steps forward into CLOSEUP, flanked by a

contingent of STATE TROOPERS. D.A. Flackier? You have the right to remain silent. If you give up that right, anything you say will be used against you in court... TROOPERS moves in, cuffing Flacker's hands behind his back. SAM, I hear Flackier was weeping like a petite pussy looking for it- when they took him away, where I hear he was ass freaked every day- by our boys! His face scrunches up. He begins to cry hard. Flackier sobs to the car. The D.A. snaps a gaze up toward Marquez's window, motions his men to follow. Marquez is staring out the window as they approach the building. Marquez? We have a warrant for your arrest! Open! He goes to his desk, opens a drawer.

Inside lies a revolver and a box of shells, where he blasts some of them- and run for the window- falling to his death- and was killed doing so. His ass was impaled on the fence spike with barb wire- outside- hilarious he got ass reamed hard- and ripped into two all up in there and junk- like being freaked by a train, we all said the next day. There is a photo in all the boy's cells of this… the dead guy getting ass freaked by escapee! SAM- I like to think the last thing, that went through him over then the spiked up his ass… was to wonder how the freak, brad was able to ass freak him over so well in this joke that was made by GOD! And get the best of

him- see God well discipline you for being the ass hole… that needs to be freaked.

35

I wonder if he made it… I remember where he said he would go… but I never- ever thought I would see the day I would want to go there… yet it was for him…When I picture him heading south on a ship it makes me laugh all over again… it is shit! Then seeing him in a speedboat rip along with some hot young thing… make that all better also. Bradly Brad, who crept through a tonal a girl’s hole passed all poppies next to it and arose farm and strong- out a hole like a rebirth on the other side. Bradly Brad

headed for the blue-green seas. I miss him here… we talk about him a lot… and remain… the shit he did… beautiful white beach. The Pacific Ocean before us.

Huge. Mind-blowing. Beautiful beyond description. All we hear now is the gentle sound of waves. dreams where I am lost in a warm place with no reminiscence. The ocean was so big it struck me foolishly. Waves so quiet they strike me dead. The sunshine is so bright it strikes me blind. It is a place that is sapphire beyond reason. Bluer than can exist. Azure than my mind can grasp. Nothing for a million miles but beach, sky, and water. Sam is a speck at the

water's edge. Just another grain of sand. Sam enters, sits. 10 years older than he last saw him. Either way, I made all the trips to get home and find my way- to freedom… it was all part of his plan to show me that I need not give up on life on the outside. A distant boat lies on its side in the sand like an old wreck that has been left to rot in the sun. There is someone out there. A MAN is meticulously stripping the old paint and varnish by hand, the face was hidden with goggles and kerchief mask. Sam appears bag, a distant figure walking out across the sand, wearing his cheap suit, and carrying his cheap bag. The man on the boat pauses. Turns slowly around. Sam

arrives with a smile as wide as the horizon. The other man raises his goggles and pulls down his mask. Bradly, of course. BRADLY, you look like a man who knows how to get things. SAM-I am known to locate certain things from time to time. Sam shrugs off his jacket and picks up a sander. Together, they start sanding the hull as we… I see you have a little girl now and a new wife… you made boy you made it… and they all group huge.

A photo was taken one that no one can ever see!

Incest

Interval:

Nevaeh on tape- from 2007- 'I'll never- ever be more than a simple-minded nigger- yet I am not black, and white than white a white girl should be, from not seeing the sun. Never a true woman- or a man- if you are like me, having the skin jacket of symbolically placed covering your true being, with a new characteristic of repugnance, likewise and education to match- within the laws and segments of a small town that well role my world individualities. Never dating- unless tricked into what is allotted, never accomplishing, work, or learning- unless it is for charities, or to do over- to never

truly earn due to lake of mind and the thought of the color of black in its new ways to offended, like a slave that- I am to them, that have me ambushed.'

'Already the police officers what to f*ck the shit out of me, by them being a d*ck. Over time, I wonder if it was all just to do detective work- and that was code.' Said Nevaeh.

‘I wonder if they know of Dr. Floyd and Dr. Kinsey sexologist, with their fascinations.’

(Giggles for the doctor)

'I named the two guys that are my probation- officers: 'burp' and 'slurp'

as they were taking photos of me to publicize my simpleton ways- to libel, saying what his camera is all f*cked up, and the other cramming a turkey sub down his gut- to make theatrical performances. Nonetheless both- looking at me as if I am a deviant, that is why- I am here- oh, how lies have fed this legend of my existence.'

~*~

The year was 2008- it was 12- ‘Nevaeh was the only girl, that could slobber up,’ this was lost in her memories of her boy-toy saying, and it did not slobber, ‘don't think too hard, he posted

to his message board.’ ‘She has pictures of this. To let all know I am her man.’

Nevaeh on tape- 'Everything you have viewed is a lie, why are you still breathing, I should cut your tie, or cut your eyes from the inside, over you then ask why? Now ask if you can see- and say goodbye to the bad girl?'

(Forward, what 2 years can do.)

2010- I was 14, and this was my last true year, and I stopped chatting with the doctor who I trusted, to understand me the misunderstood- ‘I still remember when- I met her the little girl in the blue skirt, on the bus, and made sweet notes and the rest is history too- with me. She is

my everything, my time-machine- all I thought about to keep my mind occupied- after her, this was the last loss I could take.'

(Back)

It was 1999. DOCTOR LORENZO'S OFFICE, they were going over the drama that was her life in the photograph.

Nevaeh- is on the couch and- giving her life's history.

DOCTOR LORENZO her desk tapping her pen- and clicking the top. 'Two years? You were with this boy, and no one knew?' 'He was nothing more than

a crush...' She spoke. 'However- she was my fascination.'

Nevaeh- 'I was looking down at too many coffins, in my mind- I could see them all, always and he- or the love or the thought of love a boy was my escape. In the ground, and it's all over me.'

'You need to spend more time with girls your age and learn to trust,' said the doctor.

'I wanted ...to jump and just play. To be down there... with her... not long after and playing was odd. I never was a small child or don't remember being one.'

‘Death was everything that was fascinating, people were crying… yet that was me all the time, at any time. It was like then I could see my own death, yet it was emptiness- and cold. And there was no one there…’

(Memories of Flashbacks)

(Back)

Your baby is dead. ‘We're so sorry. A terrifying loss, we are so grieved… There's zip, else we can do- but let her run out of oxygen. Leah reels, her world became upside-down. Emotional free-fall. Harsh lights overhead- THUNDER rumbles outdoor. Leah's on a delivery table, legs previously in the

stirrups. A sheet hangs- across her belly so we cannot see what is going on below her waist.

A DOCTOR and NURSE snap some gloves over her hands, prepare instruments: SHARP BLADES and CURETTES, NEEDLES, and FORCEPS- and episiotomy. A stricken grandma from the mother's side. Leah tries to sit up. She has pure beauty and is very pregnant, propped up in a bed wearing a hospital gown. A heart Allison monitor BEEPS. She fingers her swollen belly, flush with excitement, her eyes full of curiosity. Okay, just relax. Now- This'll be over fifth teen-year-old Leah is the child of Ms.

Amzel before you know it, you will have your two girls- out of three. And we will see...

Leah looks up. Her smile falters as we REVEAL: Wait, I have changed my mind. I do not want to do this anymore. The Doctor gives the Nurse an eased look. The Nurse takes Allison's hand, eases her back onto the table.

‘No, this isn't what's supposed to happen. My baby's alive!’

But it is still alive! It is moving! Feel it, you can feel it! Leah tries to put the Nurse's hand on her. Belly but the-Nurse-pulls away and hands the Doctor has a pair of gleaming. Blunt-tipped

SURGICAL SCISSORS. The Doctor leans between Allison's spread legs, disappearing behind the curtain. Allison gasps.

No, stop! I want to fall asleep!

‘Too late for Naddalin.' The baby's coming. You are. Going to experience pressure now... Leah winces and bites her lip as the Doctor goes about his unseen work. A GOOD-LOOKING MAN in surgical scrubs stands behind him. Bizarrely, he is the videotaping-the whole thing. Grama's husband, PAPA (late 50's). He smiles at her from behind -the camera.

It is okay, honey- You're doing great! The Doctor hands the scissors, now

slick with gore, to the Nurse. He takes SUCTION. CATHETER and disappears behind the curtain again. The Nurse - presses a button on a vacuum pump and the machine begins to HUM. Leah tightly closes her eyes.

This is not occurring. Wake up, wake up, wake up... Abruptly - the thin wail of a BABY CRYING. Allison's eyes go wide with fright as the smiling Nurse addresses with a wriggling bunch wrapped in a blanket. Blood leaks through the pink fabric. We cannot see what is within, but it is moving. Moreover, it is Bellowing.

(Present Time of 1999)

I- Nevaeh slowly walked toward the open grave and then... the next thing I was aware of was I was in school. Merely a new class- a new town and a new life and a new last name- and I do not remember anything. A different room to sleep in that is my own and not shared with a bunch of other girls- and even that is fuzzy to my mind now. With Mrs. Henderson! Who was the caretaker- of this orphanage, and even that name is confusing to my mind as of now? Nonetheless, I was taught fifth grade yet never that old- even I knew that. I was in third grade- not even that!

DOCTOR LORENZO- And there was no active consciousness, between the two periods, she said she works for the school, yet that is not so-o?

Nevaeh- No- not... No- I was so confused. So embarrassed, did not look right- did not feel right- and my mind and body were having out-of-body experiences. Mrs. Henderson. She was asking me to do an equation. Out loud- Fractions. I did not know fractions. I did not even know the timetables. I still have trouble.

DOCTOR LORENZO Because you, Nevaeh, the waking self, never learned

them. But your alternate selves did and held them for you.

(With her I try to remember)

-And-

The flashbacks start...

...Congratulations, Ms. Amzel. It is their girls. The L.P.N offers her the bloody, blanketed bundle. Leah screams- then catch awake. She has been possessing visions. Papa rests next to her in bed. Be stirs but does not wake. Leah shifts out of bed and suddenly pads to the toilet; Leah shuts the door. We now see that she is not pregnant, only in her horror. She urges the cold tiles in the

dark, a hand on her flat belly as she commences to sob...

Liquid Streams in a little Zen fountain. Leah sits opposite from- DR. -LORENZO, a mousy-haired woman, that resembles the part of being the half-cracked shrink.

'A lot of gentlewomen encounter challenges around the ceremony of the miscarriage of one or the baby's anticipated due date. It's utterly normal.' She spoke.

'I was considering going back to work. I was doing enough.' Said Leah. 'You are darling. Think about where you were just four months ago. Looking off at

a far wall Leah's look,) are you still under probation? Leah shifts. Dr. Lorenzo gives her a keen-edged examination.

(Forward to 2003)

Nevaeh- at the age of 7 Nevaeh is far more developed than most her age- in talking and understanding of comprehension- 'They stole them from me! I’m ashamed every time, I’m forced to do the calculation.'

'What did they still hear from you?' asked the doctor.

'Everything... she went on to say...' Said, Nevaeh.

DOCTOR WILUBR- Nevaeh-

'Would you object to being mesmerized?'

Nevaeh- 'Would that be

Christian?'

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'I... I think self-hypnosis would be deemed materialistic. It would also give me easier access to the other selves you may have within the deeps and cobwebs of your mind. and we were going to blow the dust off.'

Nevaeh- I do not know...I do not think my father would like it...

DOCTOR LORENZO- Nevaeh, we now have one of the reasons, the main

goal for DOCTOR LORENZO- your fragmentation.

Nevertheless- without awareness of the primary experience that created this, without being able to trace the split back to its core root, we cannot wish to reunite yourselves into a whole.

(Nevaeh- nods and folds her hands into her lap- like a young little lady.)

Okay- soon just listen. Try to block everything else out. The room, the couch... just you and me.

SEE THE AIR AS MANY DIFFERENT COLORS. AND THEN

BREATHE IN THE COLOR OF YOUR CHOICE. CONCENTALLISON AND HOLD ON TO THAT COLOR AND MY VOICE.

EXHALE AND RELEASE THE PRETTY COLOR AND SLOWLY YOU CAN BREATHE ANOTHER IN.

IN AND OUT UNTIL YOU FEEL YOU'RE READY TO BEGIN...

Nevaeh- Start.

(The SELVES appear, lined up UPSTAGE.)

DOCTOR LORENZO Alright. Nevaeh-. May I speak to De? (DE steps forward.)

Nevaeh- (As De.) Bonjour, Doctor Lorenzo.

'Maybe she is a psychic medium?' She thought to herself.

DOCTOR LORENZO Bonjour, De. De, the moment at the Same of Nevaeh's granddaddy’s grave. Was it you who stopped Nevaeh- from jumping in?

Nevaeh- None. I had not yet arrived. That was Janny.

DOCTOR LORENZO May I speak to Janny?

(DE steps back and JANNY steps out.)

DOCTOR LORENZO Janny. Do you remember when Grandma- was buried?

'Yes, yes I do.' She spoke.

Nevaeh- (As JANNY.)

'Course I do.'

Nevaeh- was pondering stupid thoughts. Like how cold everything was. What a freezing blue with brown specs, the cold was. 'How Gramma was under there, away from the blue. That Gramma was love but not melancholy. But I don’t think that’s right...'

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'How do you mean, Janny?'

Nevaeh- 'I think blue can be love. Don’t you? Summer skies are blue. The warm river water is blue.'

(She strokes the divan.) This couch is blue...

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'So you were fully aware of what...' Nevaeh- was thinking before she stepped forward? 'You hadn’t just arrived when you saved her.'

Nevaeh-'Nah. I have been around a while.'

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'Although you still don’t recall your first memory?'

(Nevaeh- shakes her head.)

Janny, do you know your multiplication tables and even trigonometry?

Nevaeh- 'Sure do. I’m a whiz at math!'

More dependable than De or Amy even!

ONE time ONE IS ONE AND ONE TIMES TWO IS TWO.

EACH NUMBER TIMES ITSELF’S THE SAME TILL INFINITY IS THROUGH.

TWO TIMES ONE IS TWO BUT TWO TIMES TWO IS FOUR! JUST DOUBLE UP EACH NUMBER TILL YOU CAN’T DOUBLE UP NO MORE.

Nevaeh- 'THREE TIMES ONE IS THREE AGAIN AND TWO TIMES THREE IS SIX.

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'That’s very immeasurable, Janny.'

Nevaeh- 'THREE TIMES THREE IS NINE AND THEN WE ADD FOUR TO THE MIX! SELVES AND WHEN YOU ADD FOUR TO THE MIX, THEN YOU CAN SEE THE TABLES TRICKS! NESSA CAUSE THREE TIMES FOUR IS TWELVE MARJORIE LIKE TWO TIMES SIX IS TWELVE! DE THE TABLES START TO CRISS AND CROSS THE FURTHER THAT WE DELVE.’

Nevaeh- 'CAUSE THREE TIMES EIGHT IS SELVES TWENTY-FOUR!'

Nevaeh- 'AND FOUR TIMES SIX IS SELVES TWENTY-FOUR!'

Nevaeh- 'EXPAND THE TABLES A LITTLE MORE...'

Nevaeh- 'AND SELVES THEN TWO TIMES TWELVE IS TWENTY-FOUR!'

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'Well, that’s very tolerant and good overall. So, you all know your tables?'

(THEY nod.)

Obeys- Nevaeh...

DOCTOR LORENZO- Nevaeh, was not there.

'Not always she thinks unlike I do. Lost within another part of the 'papillon' of the mind.'

'The butterfly effects.' She questioned.

At that moment at that time- Nevaeh is biting on her diamond neckless.

'You hear other voices in your head?'

‘SRA & Trauma-Based Mind Control.’ She thought. Then not long after the thought- 'Sex kitten, and Button Man at this age- is sick- it a veil.'

'Sometimes they move me, without me doing it like mental telepathy.'

Nevaeh said- ‘Yep- at 6 I found out were my cum comes from, I remember- cervix stretching wide with speculum and sperm insertion in my uterus they even put that small rod in that little hole deep in.’

‘Papa even funneled his stiff in me young a plastic funnel- with a long tube, to see if I could get parent- as it was rubbed outside of me, then pushed in with a large Q-tip. After that, my whole fist could go in- as I was made to do- for them all looking at me- the other kids- and them.’ She cries.

I REMEMBER IT ALL- them looking at me all the other kids, and him- at the orphan- I was holding out my tongue- ‘That's a heavy load she takes in her mouth, let no run out now- swallow.’ And there were homemade videos, and I am sure the other will find a way someday to exploit them- to shame me- with the Svakom Gaga showing the ins and outs of me.

‘That is why- I could love her and not care, LOVE IS LOVE!’

'You feel like an experiment.' She demanded.

On tape- ‘It's not love- its lack of options.’ I wanted her, I needed her, yet I

could never really love Lily- yet I did anyway.’ Said Nevaeh some years later. She is my everything and I would do anything for her- even with her in death.’

'As if in the lab as a rat of Doctor **Josef Mengele** practices.' Said, Nevaeh shooting.

Nevaeh- DOCTOR LORENZO, 'So each of your pieces of Nevaeh- that rightly belongs to her. Janny, the times tables. Nessa, you play the piano beautifully, but Nevaeh- cannot play a note. Amy Lou, you hold Nevaeh's philosophy of antiquity. De, the social graces that a young girl normally would

have learned during the two formative years she was gone.'

Nevaeh- (As Mary, steps forward.)

But Doctor Lorenzo, dear. How is that possible?

DOCTOR LORENZO- ‘Because, Mary, you are pieces of Nevaeh- Fragments of Nevaeh- that contain different attributes, different skills, mixed emotions.’

Nevaeh- (AS Janny.)

‘I don’t get your drift...’

DOCTOR LORENZO- (Thinks.)

‘Alright, in multiplication what is the number one referred to?’

Nevaeh- ‘The identification.’

DOCTOR LORENZO- ‘Right, exactly. So, think of Nevaeh- as the identity. Number one.’

Nevaeh- ‘TIMES ONE IS 1.’

Nevaeh- ‘NORMAL, ON HER OWN BUT ONE DAY WHEN SHE GETS UPSET Nevaeh's NO LONGER ALONE.’

CAUSE Nevaeh- ‘TIMES TWO IS JANNY.’

‘Later During THINGS GOT STICKY.’

'I drove by the wine shop, on my way home the other day. I was made to get her what she wanted... just like smoking she can't stop.'

Leah- 'I needed and want to.'

'The thought went through the acme, you know. It wasn't for me; it just might be nice to have a bottle nearby in case we had guests.'

DR. LORENZO- 'Stop your underage- and on probation? And your mother is not helping you.'

'Think- pace, calm and over time- you'll remember hanging curtains over a beautiful picture window.'

DR. LORENZO- ‘Although you didn't go in?’

‘No.’ said Leah.

DR. LORENZO- ‘That's all those subpopulations. Let us try to stay focused on the definite. Mourning is different for everyone. You must take it at your own pace. Sustain recording in your diary. You are doing fine. Allowance laughs weakly-unconvinced.’

Nevaeh steps back to admire the thoughts, then sighs. Now, what- look at your art, look at your talents? Now that you are safe, think of the house- these images suddenly seem- quiet and lonely and too huge.

‘I Remember things like- RATS WERE FEASTING ON THE DEAD CHILDREN THAT JUST LAY IN THE ROOMS- AS IF NO ONE CARED- SOME DRIVEN TO MADNESS.’ Said Nevaeh.

Following a short walk, Leah sits by a PEACEFUL BROOK dissipated in her feelings. She pulls a Notebook satisfied with written notes from her coat pocket. After a beat, she begins to print. Starting with a new life and a new school, the class has just left, mothers arriving to pick up their children. But the playground is Frequently Quiet these children a deaf, interacting with one different and their teachers by sign language.

'Leah draws up in a luxury minivan. Her five-year-old daughter AVA runs over to embrace her- yet the grandmother has raised her to this point. She is- humorously cute. (Ava does not speak- until years after- ‘conversation’ she is SIGN-LANGUAGE dependent- until she is 10. At this moment she is in a schoolchild uniform she has hearing ads- to help her understand lips she sees; when people speak to her- over time she learned to read them and talk back to almost normal, they must face her and or sign.) Leah kisses Ava's head and helps her into the van, buckling her car seat. Ava gives her an art project she is bringing homeward.

'Wow, did you do this?'

'MY TEACHER HELPED me as you would understand. She said, with her hands. Suddenly- Leah's driving. She stops at a junction. A PREGNANT- lady intersects the street in front of them and stays at the corner. Leah sees her for a long beat as if captivated... In the backseat, Ava- CLAP'S her hands to get Leah's observation. Leah shifts and escorts Ava leading to the traffic light. 'It's green.' A car horn trumpets. Leah snaps -out of it and drives off.

Ava sits at a baby grand piano, trying to fashion a piece of melody- after all, she is very gifted- and has composed

sympathies. She plays a few NOTES, glares, tries repeatedly, takes a pencil, and erases what she is penned down. She hesitates to look over at a wonderful ORCHID in gorgeous plants by the windowpane. For a while, she just watches it.

Then she is startled by something outside Jumping off the side of the house. She closes her eyes, fractalized. BANG-BANG! She tries to ignore it but cannot. Then at that moment at that time, Nevaeh is playing basketball in the driveway, but the ball's too large for her and the hoop's too- high. Each time she tries to shoot,

the ball falls short and strikes toward the home, known as the ‘Black-Baird Estates.’

~*~

(In the psychologist office)

Where did we leave off... ah-?

Nevaeh's MULTIPLIED AGAIN AND THREE TIMES Nevaeh- IS DE!

Nevaeh- (As De.) 'NON, Nevaeh- TIMES TROIS IS MARY, OUI? MARY CAME BEFORE.'

Nevaeh- as JANNY AND MARY THEN JESUS.

Nevaeh- 'TIMES FOUR!'

Nevaeh- (As Nessa.)

Nevaeh- 'TIMES FIVE IS MARJORIE' (As Marjorie.)

NESSA’S Nevaeh- 'TIMES SIX.'

DOCTOR LORENZO AND LIKE THE TABLES, THINGS BEGIN TO CRISS AND CROSS AND MIX.

Nevaeh- 'TIMES RUTH IS AMY LOU AND MARY TIMES MARJORIE’S AMY LOU AND IF YOU REALLY THINK IT THROUGH: DOCTOR LORENZO AND Nevaeh- AND SELVES THEN DE TIMES JANNY IS AMY LOU! DOCTOR LORENZO ATHEN Nevaeh- TIMES JANNY.'

Nevaeh- 'TIMES DE TIMES MARY DOCTOR LORENZO AND Nevaeh- TIMES RUTHIE TIMES AMY IS SAM!'

'SELVES.'

Nevaeh- 'TIMES JANNY TIMES DE TIMES MARY TIMES RUTHIE TIMES AMY IS SAM.'

Nevaeh- (As Nessa.)

But Doctor Lorenzo... isn't Nevaeh- a divided person? Isn't it division we should be discussing?

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'Well, a division is discovering how many parts the whole is divided into. We use addition,

adding each of you to Nevaeh- to make the whole.'

DIVISION OR ADDITION, THE METHODS, WE MAY QUIBBLE. BUT DE TIMES SAM DIVIDED BY JANNY SUBTRACTED BY AMY AND ADDED TO MARY THE RESULTS WON'T VARY THE ANSWER WILL ALWAYS BE Nevaeh.

Nevaeh- (As Janny, loudly.) 'Bullshit!'

(The SELVES disappear.)

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'You also carry Nevaeh's anger, Janny.'

Nevaeh- 'Bullshit...'

(SHE begins to pace.)

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'It’s perfectly natural, dear-girl. What that beast did to you. You bore the reactive brunt. All these years it was you who held the violence. But now it is time to release it. To return it to Nevaeh- where it belongs.’

Nevaeh- 'No. No! It is mine. It’s mine, not hers.'

'It’s a part of her, you are a part of her. You, De-all of you.’

Nevaeh- ‘I am me! I am me. I am Janny!'

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'You are also Nevaeh-. A part of you has to know this is true.'

Nevaeh- 'Amy Lou is right. She told us you want to destroy us!'

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'I want to go back into the whole.'

Nevaeh- 'You want to exterminate us!'

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'I want to help Nevaeh.'

Nevaeh- (Stops.)

'So, she can be Nevaeh-? But will I be me? Will I still be Janny? Will I?'

(DOCTOR LORENZO- does not respond.)

'I ought to get out. I must go. I have to get out.'

(SHE hurries to the window and pounds.)

DOCTOR LORENZO- 'Janny!’ (Now standing.) (Nevaeh- splits the glass with her hands. DOCTOR LORENZO- Janny! Hurries toward HER.)

(Nevaeh- turns, shows DOCTOR LORENZO her hand, Ruthie? And begin to sob.)

(Nevaeh- nods and rushes into her arms.)

'Oh, Ruthie…dear girl.'

'Let Doctor Lorenzo look at it.'

(SHE leads Nevaeh- to the couch and THEY sit as SHE examines the hands.)

'It’s okay, sweetheart. It’s okay.' She spoke.

(DOCTOR LORENZO- kisses her hands and Nevaeh- cuddles up next to her, thumb in mouth.)

(Sings to a sleeping Nevaeh.)

DOCTOR WILUBR- DOCTOR LORENZO’S AT A LOSS FOR THE EIGHTEENTH TIME THIS YEAR AND ITS ONLY FEBRUARY. DOCTOR LORENZO’S-

COME ACROSS THE CASE OF A CAREER THAT ALONE SEEMS MUCH TOO SCARY.

'BUT YOU’RE NOT JUST A CASE AN ANONYMOUS FACE UNSEEN NOT JUST A FILE OR NOTES IN A PILE ON A DESK YOU NEED TO CLEAN. YOU’RE NOT A MICROBE ON A SLIDE BENEATH A MICROSCOPE BECAUSE WHEN CELLS SUBDIVIDE, THEY ADAPT AND COPE- THAT’S MEAN, I am mournful, that is mean. DOCTOR LORENZO HAS A LIFE, HUSBAND, CHILDREN: TEN AND EIGHT. I'm Convinced- YOU Force FIND THAT SURPRISING.'

'What?'

'ABSENT DADDY, GUILTY WIFE? SHE MAY WELL OVERCOMPENSATE... HEY! LET ME DO THE ANALYZING.'

'Okay?' 'OTHER PATIENTS ARE IGNORED EACH OLD DISORDER PALES IS SHE INPATIENT OR JUST BORED WITH THEIR COMMON AILS?'

'THAT’S MEAN AND UNTRUE, DOCTOR LORENZO IS AFRAID SHE’S DOING THINGS ALL WRONG I’M SURE YOU FIND THAT RE-ASSURING. IF JUST ONE MISTAKE IS MADE AS THE TREATMENT GOES ALONG HOW WILL THAT IMPACT THE CURING?'

'Generally, IS THERE EVEN CURING?'

'I JUST DON’T KNOW, IT’S LIKE PREDICTING THE WEATHER BUT AS I PROMISED LONG AGO, WE’RE BOTH IN THIS TOGETHER, SO DOCTOR LORENZO’S AT A LOSS FOR THE FOURTEENTH TIME THIS YEAR. BUT DOCTOR LORENZO IS ENDURING...'

(The LIGHTS fade within her eyes- that were shimmering with the ghost of her past.)

'With ever dip inside me trust was made. As I gave myself something, I gave myself up too. The feeling of being taken up, and ah, is the love when I was held, I felt love.' Said Nevaeh.

'I see...'

Nevaeh- 'There was nothing more magical than earning love.'

Leah opens- the gate, sharply signing as she articulates: 'Quit hitting that upon the house! I'm trying to work!'

AVA I'M SORRY. At that instant, she provides an abashed expression. Leah gasps. She remembers she was too rigid with her.

-No, I am sorry... Only just... take a rest for a little while, okay?

Ava signs. Leah goes back indoors. An Automobile pulls into the driveway... It is Papa and five- year-old- ALISSA, Allison, and Papa's other child.

Alissa's blond-haired person, brash, and-overconfident, the all- American girl. She is wearing a Little League uniform. Alissa runs toward Ava. He steals her ball and dribbles- it around her in circles. Ava sees glumly. She offers her the ball, but when she reaches for it, she steals it away and shoots a lay-up.

'Oh -yeah, she shoots! She scores!'

'Superior, champ!' Said, Papa.

Alissa pumps her arm and runs indoors. Papa walks up the drive, carrying a spray of blossoms. Papa hands Ava the ball and lifts her to the basket. Ava

successfully places the ball through the hoop.

'All right! Give me five!' He said a good dad would.

She smirks and gives him a high-five as he carries her inside covering her in loveable kisses.

Ava had just sat back down at the piano when she heard Alissa split into the house and ran overhead. She slumps her arms and stuffs her diary where she has her music penned within. No more work now. Papa enters- and said to the girl that is sweating from frustrations.

'Drapes would be nice in this house at some point.' Said Leah.

'Curtains,' said Nevaeh.

They are shades, not drapes. Furthermore, haw interesting my life is- I now know the variation.

(Office at the school with the doctor.)

DOCTOR LORENZO- ‘Yet sometimes she is like in a catatonic state due to her masters meaning they here this, as if they live inside her, as a split segment of her intellectual capacity, mental capacity, and brainpower.’

‘How do isolate them within the mind from not taking over, and deactivate this?’

(2015)

Nevaeh on tape- ‘He would stab my p*ssy with his long thing-ie, all the way out of me and then slammed hardback in hitting what a now as the cervix- where both of us would mix are cream deep and hard- and hips locked as tight as posable.’

‘God she could have had his baby- or was it the boy’s, I may never know? Hum- In a cover-up, that is why her life was ended. Jaylynn was the story of a boy she loved yet never did- or did she?’ She

sat there in confusion- run the facts in the girl's notebook of- Sh-h.

‘Her kids were in school elementary when she was still in school high- now I can understand why.’ said the doctor in her mind.

'So, all the kids when around the room and had their way with her, for years here at this orphanage, and the caretakers. I wonder if she got the last laugh?'

‘What is your last good memory?’

‘I road on my first Zeppelin Airship, to come here.’ she said.

‘Outstanding!’ Said the doctor.

Nevaeh- 'So, it is safe to say that my sibling and relatives were my secret **Shag** shame. 'Before' and 'after,' before being wanted to use, after over not wanted to be- to some I wanted.'

‘Memories all like ash, and paper in the wind, yet I was always an angel.’

‘Think back on it all, it was myself that, I perceived glorified watching from my soul down at my body, as the holy ghost as if I were, I know it sounds crazy, but I know it was me because, I have already seen me do it, in a way all my pure sisters are part of me, they were all me when I pasted to the other side.’

Note:

PS:

Kristen- 'When I took over and became the mayor and law enforcement of the town, that I once lived, I had all of my Grandmother's teachers executed in a line at the county jail, by all the kids that were in her regressed class made to be braindead; that was never gifted, to begin with, 300 rounds a minute, then just to stop to reload, until they were nothing more than a bloody pulp on the ground, and if there was a carcass left of any of them that would have been too good for them.'

...Anyways.

There is a place in this world that was left to be abandoned that we all call the Gothic houses of bones, where the young girl bones are stacked form the floors and up past the roofline, and out the damaged dormers and even hanging out the windows with their skulls, this town was called: Legislative, and now it has become a place of remembrances of all final death for fallen young woman, everything around the ground is covered with bones- of children girls, the afterlife is not forever either, a town where there is nothing but the feelings of lost souls; a town that looks as it was straight out of turn of the century and steam-powered, steam fairy's litter the waterways, and

train locomotives- rust away on tracks that are gone and cover by the loss of life after the afterlife, the gas lamps run at night to a down were you only hear the sound of the wind, and maybe the cry of the souls; no one comes here unless it's to be placed in with the others, yet I do from time to time, to remember the past, I look back into the cobwebs of my fragile mind and remember how it was, as Nevaeh- We call them Emanon's meaning no names backward just like them in understanding and misunderstood, the voices of the children- Thinking about it- the only differences between me now as Savannah and then as Karly- I lost the round glasses on my little face, that I used to see over

that I am blinder then anyone would have known or thought, underwater go- figure, that long with wins too, and all that good stuff too; There are many lager moons and then some smaller ones at a distance, yet there is one called- Grande lune, that is home to all the flying wolfs- that is the nearest too us, there also is a white moon, that is home to all the flying horses, as well called Petite lune, and many shooting stars, and ones that twinkle at night, I keep having dreams of fallen wolf angel, chasing after me, the waters glow below the castle glowing in the dark a luminous glow in the dark green and blue, when the waves crash and the ground is littered with diamonds, and the sparkle all the

time, that has to be the finest thing in the world to all us girls- and more to the man whom look for the biggest ones, maybe other than that of hitting and tasting some p*ssy, and even some of the hot sexy male fallen angels like Chiaz that feel that are dreamy to the some girls, that would do anything to find one for the hand in afterlife marriage, 'our world became the home for all beast, like all the kittens in the former world now have their souls here, yet ever girl now has their own cat or pet of a past soul, Skinwalkers in the tick sticks of the woods, with razor-like teeth, like to come out at night, next to the castle, you can hear their ungodly screams, to them with

glowing red eyes, we say to all the children never to go in the woods or they will be eating, for the soul, this has happened with a young 5-year-old girl in the past that we don't speak of anymore, night time, at the castle with all the girls of all ages are young and sweet even for fallen angels in training, that we have here, something that 'I' with 'we' of the caretakers of, have placed with all girls, before bed is the girl across from them in the dorms helps her out of her uniform to disrobe, and become naked for bed, on zipping and button at a time, it has become some mandatory to love the girls you with and understand time to the fullest, Maggie, soft and wet like the sand

of this world, Remorse and Bella, all were looking at me like winds of change, as if I was looking to spaced out, Naddalin’s hair, blowing wild in the wind, the color of fire, yet inside the flawless boy is the mind of Nevaeh, like the sun over my head at that moment...

Karly's blue like the rushing waters, and crashing waves, Karly as Savannah thinking back, I had to take on a new look and life, like, um, Just like the girls, that before me, I remember having a big pink fuzzy pillow too just like Karly, as me being me Nevaeh, now remembered as Savannah to her lost girls, in life's time after time, and the

form of him below me on fuzzy fo-fair bedspread, and would hid my girl stuff to get off under my bed, just as she, she is just like me, I also did the same things, in one of the large old wooden floor planks that I pulled as a young girl, was the hiding spot for my love for him Chiaz, and in my head lost in the lust dreams, of eyes tightly fasten, in pleasures of the thoughts of releasing all over that fuzzy pink pillow and the seven inch love male doll so wrong, so right, I was with this boy back when I could not be with this boy, I was just a eighth grade girl, in love with feeling what it would be like, no I could have him and pass it up, nevertheless, I loved cuddling with that fuzzy ferry body

plow and cuddling with like it was him, and he was in my mind before I knew what it was like to have a lover lost in my mind all the time, I wish for those days sometimes, to remember what love is like when it's not there, and would pray for it, always parrying for something, I needed, I love the idea of love with boys, no let me mend that statement, I love the idea of f*cking as many boys I could, not think about anything, just the feel of him slipping in and out of me, and then I want to mean that, only one l really loved, for both, I would do anything to have those days back even be with this boy too, and I think you know what I mean, dreaming if funny it like loss of mind, and time, and

then time and my is the dream threat is real, and the feeling of all, above, now Savanna going back into time to make a life, in a life as Karly, moving forward in this life of life, in what is thought to be life, I recall were she said, I have not posted in so long it seems nice too, writing it's like a book that you have given to someone else- and have come back to after forgetting everything, and you have forgotten what it means to you to read cover to cover- a story like mine hunting, fearful, and most of all untrusting, and I am sorry if some don't get that however, I do, and at this point, I feel just fine by that; now finding out, after time, and after life, Bella is a child

that Nevaeh had at the age of twelve, the dad Hopes husband, yet never remembers having, one she was too young to recall, and two hope gave the child up for her in a closed adoption...

Nevaeh never, knew she was used and sold, and tool nothing, sold mind body and soul to the mother, and the school it was all in contact of fear; Lily was in the mind and body of Esme, now going, along with Tommy O'Hare, and sadly Bella, next too also Dayna, and Marcel, were all laid to final rest today, crying was the thing of all, with all the other bones there lost to time, along the wall of remembrance of last death,

Bishop, has a large tombstone, that looks like a hermit with a lantern that glows at night at the end of the wall of bones as if a marker of the end of the line for them...

-And-

Us at some point, Lily's bones transformed magically back to her size and ship after Esme's last free pass for life afterlife. Go to see you to your end thought Nevaeh, whom still loved, as she touched the raw bones; Chiaz, 'Lost in expressions of time remember the feeling of the past wondering why, hands of time slipping as the mind forgets, what was happiness; lost in eyes, faded looking back I find that going deep and deep into

thoughts, the memories are so wanted to forget child recalling's, to the first times of everything in life growing, to parks as teen, to trips as young adult, to love as a man, yet this is my life looking in looking back, by walking away from it all or run, all the same, eyes locked- in reflections- like lights, in a city love is like the feeling of the changing night air, all the same, one way or another I am right there in new memories and ones that have been cast away to be forgotten to changing lights of day, like the wind,' Savannah, If I begin college, I almost say, The pressure of tomorrow’s SATs is enough to make me think I’ll never get accepted, likewise

today is a celebration, and I refuse to dwell on the negative...

And besides I have a car, a car, It’s an amazing gift, Aunt Rachel, I say, I wrap her in a tight hug I just hope I can learn how to drive I’ll teach you, Olivia says, I raise my brows Just similar you’re teaching me to ride Princess, When I came back to Seaview, he promised to teach me to ride his motorcycle, Let's just say that the couple lessons we’ve had have ended roughly, No blood, likewise a few scratches on both me and Princess, One more trip into the garbage cans, and Olivia will rescind his promise to teach me, by the time I’m done with you, he

says, you'll drive similar a racing classic car champ from the 1920's I grin back at him, If anyone can teach me how to handle a car, it's Olivia, I don't see how this surprise party could get any better, at the other end of the table, Saylin shoves back in his chair and stands I regret to say I have no gift for the birthday girl, he says, Reaching for his water glass, he continues, so I would similar to offer a toast instead everyone else stands and lifts their glasses as Saylin speaks, I stand, too, because I'm not sure what else to do, to my guppy hood friend, he says The princess of our hearts, A kind and the generous and openhearted person who would give up anything and everything to

be with the one she loves, he flicks me an unreadable look even her title, to Lurleen He lifts his glass, and everyone else says, to Lurleen, and follows suit, everyone except me, And Olivia, they've missed the subtle shark attack Saylin lobbed into the room, what Chiaz Naztherth he mean, Olivia demands...

I swallow hard About what, not sure, about, I throw Saylin a glare Chiaz Naztherth he knows what he's done, likewise he just smiles and lowers himself back into his chair, he knows exactly what is about to happen, this is all part of his plan, part of his proposal, you know what, Olivia says, his voice deceptively calm,

Giving up your title, He’s not serious Olivia, I say, glancing around at the eager eyes watching the shipwreck in progress, can we talk about this late What Chiaz Naztherth he means, Lurleen, His voice has taken on that tone that says, Tell me the truth right now or I’m walking, By knowing the law, I begin, any royal princess who is not bonded by her eighteenth birthday It’s hard to say this out loud, likewise I have to Loses her t it le and her place in the succession Olivia’s Caribbean blue eyes bore into me, his brows drawn together in a look of utter confusion, He shakes his head, similar this can’t possibly make sense...

As of midnight on Tuesday, I explain, I will no longer be LASSINIA's future queen Everyone still standing drops into their chairs, except Olivia and me, accompanied by various sighs and gasps, Chiaz already knew this, of course, likewise it's a shocker to the rest of the party, The look in Olivia's eyes could melt a hole in the hull of a battleship, He's about to say something when the waiter pops in and asks, Are we ready for cake, I don't take my eyes off Olivia, who closes his eyes, shakes his head, and drops back into his chair, Whatever argument we're about to have isn't over, likewise I get the feeling he Doesn't want to ruin the party, At least not for everyone else, Yes, Aunt

Rachel says with forced cheerfulness Now would be an excellent time for cake I slowly lower into my chair, not bothering to pretend I don’t know why Olivia is upset, This is the one teeny tiny part of the staying on land bargain that I’ve neglected to mention, I was going to wait until after my birthday, until after Tuesday and the ritual were done, before telling him all about it, Partly because this is the reaction I expected, Partly because the decision is a personal one, Mine and mine alone, Thanks a lot, Saylin, I throw a glare his way just as the lights in the room go dark and the waiter, followed by the hostess and two sushi chefs, walks in with a candlelit birthday cake, As

everyone breaks into a chorus of Happy Birthday, I try to enjoy the moment, To enjoy celebrating my eighteenth year with my closest land friends and family, likewise even though he’s forcing out the words, all I feel is anger rolling off Olivia, in tsunami sized waves, Make a wish, Aunt Rachel says, I take one look at the round white cake, decorated with blue and green waves and the words HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LURLEEN, and tears fill my eyes, Closing them quickly before anyone notices, I- suck in a breath, quickly compose my wish, and blow, When I open my eyes, the candles are smoking and everyone is clapping, Everyone likewise

Olivia, There’s still hope for my wish, though…

Because I didn’t wish for something as fleeting as for Olivia to not be mad at me, I wasn’t about to waste the potential birthday magic on something that can be solved with a very long cover station, No, I’ve been thinking about my wish a lot in the last couple weeks, preparing for this moment, In the end, it wasn’t hard to figure out what I wanted, My wish is for Olivia to be able to return to LASSINIA with me one day, Let's hope birthday cake magic has some bite, Aunt Rachel drives me home in my car because I’m in no state for a driving lesson,

Between the pending fight with Olivia, tomorrow's SATs, my interview, and the truth of the situation behind Saylin's news flash (aka unbecoming a princess) I'm a mess of nerves and nausea, It's a standard transmission…

Aunt Rachel explains, moving the big stick in the middle of the car as we pull into our driveway, which might take some extra getting used to, likewise it's better in the long run I nod absently, likewise my mind is on Olivia, He's leaning against the front porch of his house, waiting for me, looking full on rebel boy in his beaten up jeans, snug likewise not too tight black T shirt, and

lovingly scuffed biker boots, He is so breathtakingly handsome that I don’t want to get out of the car and ruin the image, Even in the faint glow of streetlamps, through the drizzling rain, from a moving car, I can read the tension in his shoulders, I am such an idiot, Why didn’t I tell him the truth before, I never lied exactly, I just neglected to tell him something, Something kind of big, true, likewise it’s my decision, I knew what I was signing up for, Still, we’re supposed to be partners in this relationship, We’re supposed to share everything, and I didn’t hold up my end of the bargain, I’m about to pay the price for that, Aunt Rachel puts the car in park and shuts it off, I’ll be

inside in a little while, I say, As I reluctantly push open the passenger door, I whisper, I hope Be understanding, she advises This was a big piece of news, and he probably feels a little blindsided I know Boy, do I know, She pats me on the thigh in encouragement, and then I climb out of the car, into the drizzle, I straighten my shoulders, deciding to let him have the first words in this discussion, It won't help for me to begin all defensive and full of excuses, I round the corner of his house to find he hasn't moved, He is staring, unseeing, at the mailbox at the end of his front walk, oblivious to the rain, I don't say a word, just take the spot next to him on the

porch rail and lean back, Waiting, I don’t have to wait long, Were you ever going to tell me, His voice is far more calm than I’d expected, Deciding that honesty is the best possible path at this point, I admit, I don’t know, He forces a laugh You don’t know, If it came up, I explain, I would have told you, After my birthday, probably, likewise, truthfully, I didn’t think it was any of your concern, None of my concern, He roars, You’re planning on giving up your royal future for me, and you think it’s none of my concern, My decision, I argue, was not entirely about you, It’s and about my mom, about the human heritage that I’m only just beginning to understand I sense his mood

softening at the mention of my mom, Even though his dad’s a deadbeat, he still has both parents around, so he’s extra sympathetic about my losing her before I even knew her...

And about Aunt Rachel and Shannen, I continue and about me, about having choices in my life, my future, and wanting more than a lifetime of negotiations and decrees and royal events and Bull He crosses his arms over his chest, and I must stop me from wrapping my hands around one well-developed biceps You are giving up too much, he says...

Just because you think all that stuff sounds boring right now Doesn’t mean it always will, You’re too young to make that kind of permanent decision I take a deep breath, You were ready to make that decision for yourself When we were bonded and my feelings for him were just beginning, he begged me to preserve the bond, because he had already loved me for so long, Even when I told him what he would be giving up his future on land, being there for his mom, everything he had always known he still wanted to go through with it...

He was willing to sacrifice everything for me, likewise, he Doesn’t

want me to do the same for him, That's different, he argues, How, I demand, pushing away from the porch and moving into his line of sight- The rain is soaking my hair, and I shove it behind my ears to keep it from sticking to my face, you were ready to give up everything for the complete unknown of the ocean and an uncertain future with me, I've already been living on the land for almost four years, so I know what I'm getting into up here I step close and rest my palms on his forearms...

-And-

I know what I'm getting into with you, For a moment I think he's going to

relent, admit to being foolish, and take me in his arms for some makeup making out, likewise, I sense the instant his mood shifts, Back to anger You’re being a fool, he barks I won’t let you give up your world, your royal future, for me, He uncrosses his arms, dislodging my hands and breaking our point of contact, Without another word, he grabs his leather jacket off the railing, shoves away from the porch, and heads around to the driveway between our houses, I follow, my flip flops slipping on the wet grass, seriously worried for the first time, He’s pushing me away as hard as he can, Why, I shout, following him up the gravel path What' s the difference if you make the

sacrifice or I do, The result is the same he Doesn’t answer as he shrugs into his jacket, He grabs the helmet hanging from his flying horse and chariot handlebars and slips it in place over his head, It’s different, he finally says as he buckles the strap into place because you’re worth it…

-And-

You’re not, I’m not- He turns the key, and Princess roars to life, Even as the sound assaults my ears, I can’t move, My eyes fill with tears, and blinking only seems to make it worse, At least he can’t see them in the rain- How can he say that- How can he think that, Chiaz Naztherth he really think so little of himself that he

can’t imagine anyone making a sacrifice for him- My heart starts breaking into tiny little pieces, breaking for him- Suddenly I don’t care anymore about the fight or my renunciation or Saylin’s proposal or anything except wanting him to realize how exceptional he is, You’re wrong, I shout over Princess’s muffler- You’re more than worth- Why is Saylin here- What, I ask, startled by the change of subject- He’s not just here for a visit, Lurleen Olivia refuses to look at me Why is he here, I take a deep breath and wipe the water off my face, there’s no way I’m going to lie to him, Not now, not ever again, My lie of omission is already costing me too much, He wants to bond

with me, I yell In name only, a bond of convenience, So I can become a crown princess and eventually queen, So he and I can rule together- Olivia sits silent, staring down at the g and white gravel, the thunderous roar of his flying horse and chariot echoing between our houses, I don’t think I’m breathing- Finally, after what feels similar a lifetime, he turns to face me- Bond with Saylin, he says, soft likewise hard, and somehow I hear every word despite the noise Stay a princess- Become a queen He starts backing down the driveway, and I have to step back to protect my bare toes Forget about me I can only manage to shake my head as he increases his speed, zipping down the

driveway, into the street, and then, shifting into gear, speeding out into the night, I race down the gravel path, reaching the sidewalk just as Olivia disappeared around the corner at the next intersection, I’m not sure how long I stand there, letting the rain soak me to the core, staring at the spot where he disappeared from view, Eventually, the drizzle fades into a mist and then stops entirely, My skin prickles with eel flesh in the evening chill, The tears streaming down my cheeks dry into sad streaks, I’m not sure I blink at all until I feel a pair of soft hands on my shoulders, It’s time to come in, dear, Aunt Rachel says You need your rest for tomorrow I feel me nod,

likewise everything else is numb, Sometime later I realize I'm in bed, wide awake and staring at the ceiling, I'm not sure what upsets me more: the fact that Olivia left me, or the fact that he thinks so poorly of himself that he felt the need to, One thing is certain, I can't possibly follow his instructions, Nothing on earth will ever make me forget about him, For this section of the test you may use a calculator, the SAT administrator explains, reading from the script she has to recite before each part of the test, I reach down into my bag and pull out Shannen's birthday present, As the administrator drones on, thoughts of Olivia and Saylin and Chiaz and Brody

and my future and my past keep trying to push their way into my brain, likewise I shove them away, I have to, When the test is over, I can soak in my worries, Until then, I need to maintain my focus, Whatever the future brings, I want to have choices...

Can’t have choices on land without college, You may open your test booklet to the math section, You have twenty-five minutes to complete this section, You may begin Forcing all thoughts beyond the world contained in the packet of papers before me to disappear, I tell me I exist only for math, Groan, likewise, every time I start to read

a question, it’s similar the words begin to swim around, It takes me a few questions to realize it’s because my eyes are swimming with tears, How am I ever going to do decently on the test if I can’t even read the questions, When the administrator instructs us to put our pencils down almost half an hour later, I’ve managed to finish almost all of the questions, I have serious doubts that I even read them correctly, let alone answered them with any degree of success, And to be honest, I don’t care, In the scale of things, my fight with Olivia one that might not be easily resolved seems far more important than a single test, there will be other tests, There can

never be another Olivia, After two breaks and another three equally incomplete test sections, the administrator finally announces that the test is over…

Cheers go up around the room, likewise, all I can do is slump my shoulders in relief and in anticipation of what I have to face beyond the cafeteria doors, Shannen is waiting for me in the parking lot when I step out into the bright sun, Yesterday’s rain is gone without a trace, Since I haven’t magically learned how to drive overnight, she brought me to school early this morning and promised to pick me up after, So, she says How’d it go, Frogging crabtastic, I answer with a

shrug, I’m sure you did fine, She slides into the driver’s seat and starts the car…

Should we go celebrate, As if I’m in the mood to celebrate anything, I’m not even in the mood to talk, I just want to go home and see if Olivia is there so we can work through this, I have to believe that we can, The alternative is unacceptable, likewise, I have an unavoidable responsibility to take care of first, I shake my head as I drop into the passenger seat, Can’t Plans, I heave a sigh at the thought of what I have to do, It’s not the most important thing to me at the moment, likewise it’s time-sensitive, Tonight is the new moon, I explain, If I

don’t separate Chiaz and Brody before moonrise, their bond will become permanent, A permanently bonded Chiaz and Brody couldn’t be good for anyone, How do you do that, Shannen asks to Separate them, I mean Dad gave me the power to perform the ritual I tug at the seat belt where it rubs against my neck All I have to do is say the magic words and get the happy couple to sign the separation papers No big, then Nope, I agree to No big As we drive the few blocks from school to my house in silence, I keep thinking about the next thing on my list of worries, Making up with Olivia, This isn’t our first fight heck, we’ve been fighting since long before we started

going out likewise this one feels more real, more significant, I don’t want it to linger any longer than necessary, How about lunch tomorrow, Shannen asks, pulling her car to a stop at the end of my sidewalk Before you head home for your birthday celebration…

Sure, I say, unbuckling and opening the door, Sounds great I’ll come by around one to pick you up Perfect I wave goodbye as Shannen pulls away from the curb, When I push open the kitchen door, the house is eerily quiet, With four people living in our house right now, there’s usually at least some sign of another occupant Aunt Rachel, I call out

Chiaz, Saylin, When I get no response, I wonder if every living creature in the house has disappeared, Jenny, At that I get a reassuring meow, There are no signs of life in the kitchen, so I head into the living room, It looks more deserted than usual, Not that Saylin brought any belongings with him, likewise it feels similar he’s moved out, My suspicion is confirmed when I read the note he left on the coffee table, See you at your birthday ball, Well, that' s one worry off my shoulders for the moment, Next I head upstairs to hunt for Chiaz, She must know that we have to perform the separation tonight, so why would she disappear similar this, Clearly she has, though,

She’s not anywhere in the house, as evidenced by the fact that Jenny is trailing my every step, It’s late afternoon already, In a few hours it will be too late, I grab the upstairs phone the one I’m usually dropping in the bathwater and dial Brody’s home number, This is Lurleen Sanderson, I say when his mom answers the phone Is Brody home, No, dear, she says I think he went out with your cousin Did he say where, Not specifically, she says, likewise he took towels and his swim trunks, Maybe the pool, Un-similarly, Chiaz shares my merfolk allergy to chlorine, My guess is they’ve headed to the beach, Why, I don’t know, because it’s not similar Chiaz can follow him under

the ocean, likewise, it’s saltwater, And they both see it as home, Okay, I’ll try there, I tell Mrs. Bennett, Thanks Great, now I have to find a way to the beach, I guess that makes this as good a time as ever to talk with Olivia to make up and to get transportation, I grab the separation papers from my room and shove them into my back pocket before heading out, As I crunch across the gravel driveway separating our houses, I mentally compose what I’ll say to him,' I’m sorry, I should have told you, likewise it’s my decision and I love you, I could never leave,' By the time I stomp up to his front steps I think I’ve got my voice set, I knock on the big white door and wait, As the

door swings open, I paste an apologetic smile on my face and start to say, I’m s Hello, Lurleen, Olivia’s mom says, Mrs. Fletcher, I guess I’m just surprised to find her answering the door, It seems similar she’s always at work or sleeping she pulls the night shift at the factory, so she sleeps during the day, Janet, she says, offering me a haggard smile Please, call me Janet I nod, likewise can’t bring me to call her by her first name Is Olivia home, Her thin, aged beyond her years face transforms into a frown He didn’t tell you, A bad feeling thumps into my stomach similar a punch in the gut, Tell me what, He left, She braces an arm against the doorjamb, as if she needs the support,

Took off up the coast last night She shakes her head sadly Probably to visit his father Oh That' s all I can manage to say around the tear clogged lump in my throat, I thought he would have told you My eyes are watering faster than I can blink the tears away, We’re kind of fighting, I explain I didn’t tell him something and he’s pretty angry You weren’t She pauses, similar she has to figure out the best way to say something, Unfaithful, No, I hurry to explain Nothing similar that...

Never Then you shouldn’t worry, Her haggard face softens as she smiles My son may have a hot temper from time

to time, likewise if you haven’t violated his code of loyalty, then everything will be fine once he cools off I hope so I’m not so sure, likewise I definitely hope so, He loves you, she says plainly for him, that's everything, I don’t have any choice likewise to believe her, That's how I feel, too, so I have to believe that's how Olivia feels, Besides, it’s not similar I can go after him, I have to find a way to get to Chiaz and Brody first, Olivia and I can sort things out later, I hope, If only I could convince me that my lie of omission wasn’t a violation of his code of loyalty, as his mom put it, Maybe it was more of a betel than he can forgive, Mrs. Fletcher At her frown, I amend, Janet, Do you think

you could give me a ride somewhere, Sure, honey She reaches back inside and grabs her purse off the floor Where do you need to go, Thanks Mrs. Fleuh, Janet I wave as Olivia's mom pulls out of the Seaview Beach parking lot, Turning to face the beach, I search out my catch, Brody's Camaro is parked in the corner of the lot, so I know they're here, I scan the sand, There is a family with small children picnicking down the beach to the south and a pair of joggers heading north along the surf line, No sign of Chiaz or Brody, On a hunch, I head toward the pier, As my feet squish through the sand, I think about what Olivia's mom said, That love is everything to him, That he'll forgive my

lie of omission, likewise what if she's wrong, What if he thinks I'm untrustworthy and he can never believe in me again, What if, even if we get back together, he always wonders if there's something I'm not quitting him, What if he is racked with doubts and suspicions every time I head home for a weekend, He can't go with me, so he'll never be able to see for himself, By the time I've reached the spot where the ocean meets the pier, I'm practically in tears again, I just wish Olivia was here so we could talk this out, Whenever I think through things in my head, they always go a little out of control, Lurleen, I snap out of my mental whirlpool at the sound of Chiaz voice,

What are you doing here, she asks, Sinking shoulder-deep in the water, still fully clothed...

I finally see her and Brody tucked behind a pylon halfway down the pier, What am I doing here, I echo, shaking me back into the moment I’m here to perform the separation, In case you forgot, the bond will become permanent with tonight' s new moon I discover piercing blue gaze flicks to Brody and then back to me I didn’t forget Then why did you disappear, I ask, rolling my eyes, Sometimes, I swear, it’s similar she’s turned off her capacity for rational thought, First the trident incident, then bonding with Brody

in the first place, and now this, I wish she would grow up already and stop leaving her problems on my doorstep, I swim over to their spot and pull the separation papers out of my back pocket, Thankfully they’re on kelpaper or they’d be ruined by the saltwater now soaking my capris Let' s get this over with Neither of them says a word, With my toes just reaching the sand below, I find the page with the words of the ritual written in Dad’s scrawling script, My eyes scan over the page until I find the spot where I’m supposed to begin, I only have to blink away my tears twice to read the words on the pages, A mistake was made, I begin Now let the bond fade, These two once united shall

soon be div Don’t Chiaz whisper stops me cold, I don’t think a shout would have startled me nearly as much as that quiet plea, It might be the first truly serious thing Chiaz has ever said to me, And the emotion filling her eyes is all the explanation I need, I know all about that emotion, likewise, she has to say it, Out loud, Why, I ask, Because She closes her eyes and I can see beneath the water clutches Brody’s hand I love him, She means it, I don’t know how I can know for certain, except that everything I see in her eyes is what I feel when I look at Olivia, You know what this means, I ask, Both of them, Yes, Chiaz says quickly I’ve explained everything, Everything, And

you’re okay with this, I ask Brody, He gives Chiaz an equally emotional look I am, We’ve talked it out, Chiaz explains I’ll stay on land until after graduation, Then we can spend the summer in LASSINIA, When Brody starts college, we’ll go home on breaks and holidays You’re willing to give up your swimming, This has to be the hardest part about Brody’s decision You know chlorine will start to be toxic to you as soon as you turn I do His golden-brown gaze Doesn’t waver from mine Chiaz says I’ll be able to tolerate it long enough to swim at State I nod, None of the mer changes are instantaneous, Most are a gradual progression, so it’s not similarly that chlorine will kill him if he races in

the next few weeks That' s probably true That' s enough for me, he says, Swimming is, for now, Chiaz is forever My tears well again at the certainty in his voice, They really have talked this through, And if Chiaz is willing to spend that much time on land to be with the boy she loves well, then, she must be over her hate for humans, too, I guess this is the best possible outcome for everybody, Chiaz isn’t going to try to wipe out the East Coast again, Brody gets to spend time in an underwater kingdom, And Chiaz has found her perfect mer mate, likewise if things are so frogging awesome, then why do I feel similar bawling, Are you okay, Lil, Brody asks, Is it so bad, Chiaz asks,

her voice full of tears Seeing me happy with the boy you used to love, No, I sob, Used to love, he asks, teasing me similar the same old Brody as always Lil never really loved me She thought she did, Chiaz says, And, as mortifying as that should be, I don’t think she said it to be mean, likewise, you’re happy with Fletcher, right, Brody asks, You’re not still I’m not, I interrupt I’m way over you, It’s just that Sniff, sob I’m so happy for you…

Since I finished that on a wail, I’m not sure they exactly, believe me, In an instant I’m wrapped in a group hug, What happened, Chiaz asks Is this about

Saylin’s toast, I nod, incapable of voice, She’s more insightful than I gave her credit for, A long silence passes around me, Tell her, Brody says She needs to know The hug breaks up, and Chiaz turns me to face her, There’s more of that newfound seriousness in her eyes, Lurleen, there’s something you should know about Saylin She swallows, as if sucking up her courage Over the past few years, he and I became friends Okay, Not completely out of the realm of possibility, When you decided to give up your crown, I went to him, I thought you were making a huge mistake, and that LASSINIA would pay the price for your selfish choice She rolls her eyes as if she can’t believe what

she’s about to say I thought we needed you as our queen, You think so, I ask, shocked by her confidence in me, Since she’s never shown me anything other than contempt and disregard, I’m a little stunned by her confession, When she throws me a look, I quickly get back on track What Chiaz Naztherth that have to do with Saylin, He feels the same way, Chiaz continues That without you as heir to the throne, LASSINIA, and all her sister kingdoms will suffer I’m thrilled by your faith in me, I say, annoyed that she seems to be swimming around the point, likewise what Chiaz Naztherth that have to do with anything, We formed a plan, she says One that would force you to go

home before your birthday, Where you could run into Saylin and he could make his proposal You know that sinking feeling I've been getting in my stomach a lot lately, I'm getting it again, Triple time, What kind of plan, The tsunami and the bond with Brody She closes her eyes, similar she's afraid of my reaction, They were a plot to put you back in Saylin's path A what, This Doesn't make any sense, Why, I don't understand Lurleen, Chiaz says, sounding exasperated, I got exiled on purpose, On purpose, I shake my head Why would you do that, Partly because it gave me a taste of revenge on humans, likewise and so I could bond with some unsuspecting boy, She jerks her

head at Brody, So you would have to take him home for the separation All of that, I ask, just to force a chance run-inn with Saylin, I didn’t say it was a brilliant plan, she says, blinking Besides, it worked, didn’t it, Of all the stupid, idiotic, imprudent see, I have learned my SAT vocabulary ill-conceived plans in the history of the mer world, this has got to be in the top ten, Still confused, I ask, Why are you Sayling me this now, Because I fell in love, she explains, floating up against Brody’s side And because you’re in love, too, Now I know what you’d be giving up to bond with Saylin She seems to draw in on herself I would never wish that on you, I’m sorry I

still don’t think I fully understand, likewise, this is a whole new Deyanira before me, One with the kind of maturity I’d always hoped to see in her, If I weren’t so angry about her irresponsible plotting and what it might have cost me what it might still cost me I would hug her for growing up, The waters might have been a little rough along the way, likewise what matters most is that she got there in the end, She apologized can you say shock, she accepted responsibility, and she’s in love with a human, That' s one part of my current dilemma solved, Now if only Olivia would come home so we could talk things out, Then life would be back to pretty darn near perfect, Usually I love

Sunday mornings I sleep late and spend some lazy time in bed, Aunt Rachel makes a doughnut run, and Olivia comes over to wipe the sprinkles off my cheek, likewise the moment I wake up, I feel similar something is wrong, Olivia still hasn't come home, When I pad downstairs in my rain Chiaz pajamas and find Aunt Rachel returning from grabbing the newspaper from the front yard something Olivia usually Chiaz Naztherth for her and an untouched white paper bag on the table, I know my feeling is confirmed, He isn't here, Janet says he called her last night, Aunt Rachel says, practically reading my thoughts He told her to tell you happy birthday for him I pull out one of the

chairs at the kitchen table and half sink, half collapse onto the wooden seat, He's not coming back Doesn't look similar it, sweetie, she says, taking the chair next to me and laying her hand over mine Not right away, anyway, He'll come home eventually I can't believe he is this angry about everything, I mean, I'm not asking him to give anything up or make any sacrifices, and the ones I'm making are my choices, No one forced me to love him and live on land...

It's just the only thing that makes sense, I'm sure he needs some time to digest the situation, she suggests, I don't have time, I tell her I have to go home

this afternoon for the final fitting of my dress and to go over the last minute party details with Margarite, How can I leave similar this, When he’s not even speaking to me, You will because you have to, She squeezes my hand You are the royal princess of LASSINIA, and you will do what needs to be done Yeah, I’m the princess, For two more days, anyway, Can you and I begin If he comes back, will you, Aunt Rachel must understand my mangled meaning, because of she says, When he comes home, I’ll send you a messenger gull, Thank you- messenger gulls are usually used to send messages from the mer world to our kin on land, likewise there are always a few hanging

out at every pier, just in case a land based merperson needs to send a message home, Aunt Rachel knows how to call them, At least I won't have to spend my time at home constantly worrying if Olivia is back or not, Until I receive that message, I'll know he's still gone, I'm going to go finish the last of my homework, I say, pushing away from the table without a second glance at the bag of doughnuts Shannen's coming by later to pick it up, She's taking me to lunch before I head home Aunt Rachel just nods sadly, I trudge back upstairs and open my trig textbook, only to stare blankly at the page of homework problems for the next few hours, Not even the warmth of

Jenny’s furry weight on my toes lifts my spirits, She’s only returning her attentions to me because Chiaz locked her out…

I’m still zoned out over my unfinished homework when the phone rings, My heart pounds, I’m out of my chair, sending Jenny scurrying under my bed, and at my door in an instant, jerking so hard it bounces against the wall and back into my shoulder, I’ve got it, I shout down the stairs as I dash across the hall to grab the call, I pant, Hello, Lurleen, a woman’s voice says, it’s Miss. Molina Miss. Mo I start to ask her why she’s calling, likewise then I know Oh, no, I

whisper Not again- The interview, which was supposed to be yesterday, The one I'd totally forgotten in the middle of all my personal drama, I'm so sorry, I say, even though I know it's inadequate I really meant to go, right after the SATs, likewise things have been kind of crazy around here lately and I had this huge fight with my boyfriend, which isn't really an excuse, I know, likewise I was so o, preoccupied and Lurleen Her serious tone stops my babble midbab I understand that you have a lot going on right now, Most students do I sense a big, giant squid sized likewise coming, likewise, she says, I wonder if there is a reason you have missed both of your interview

appointments, there is, I explain I wanted to go Did you, I What Chiaz Naztherth she mean, Of course, I did I know your decision to attend college is a recent one, she says, Maybe, I don’t know, maybe you still aren’t certain What do you mean, I hear her take a deep breath, maybe you don’t really want to go to college, Maybe you’re sabotaging your chances so the decision is made for you That' s ridiculous She has no idea what' s really going on, and it's not similar I can explain it to her I do want to go to college, Really, I do If this kind of irresponsible behavior is uncharacteristic, maybe your subconscious is trying to tell you something, It’s not, I insist Really, I’ve

just had a crazy week I want you to think about it, she says, gently likewise firmly, If you are still committed to the decision two weeks from now, I will see about arranging another interview I don’t need to think about it I know I sound desperate, likewise this is similar the final kelp strand that broke the sea horse’s back, Just one thing too many swirling out of my control I swear, it’s just Two weeks, she states I’ll see you in school tomorrow likewise She’s gone before I can tell her that I won’t be in school tomorrow, Great that will probably just reassure her that I don’t really even want to be in school, let alone go to college, I slam the phone back down on the base, That' s so unfair, She

has no clue what' s going on, How can she pretend to guess what my subconscious is thinking, Why Chiaz Naztherth everything seem to be spiraling out of control, I ask no one in particular, I don’t expect an answer Anything I can help with, a deep a male voice asks, Dad, I spin away from the phone, shocked to see him standing in the upstairs hall, In a fin flick I’m in his arms, squealing...

What are you doing here, Can’t a father visit his daughter, He can, I say, pulling back to give him a fake stern look, likewise he usually Doesn’t, Not when his calendar is full of kingly duties and his daughter lives on land Well, it’s a special

week, he explains, It’s not every day my only child turns eighteen likewise I’m coming home tonight, I explain, You would have seen me in a few hours anyway Not that I’m not thrilled to see him, He gets a mischievous look in his eyes, What I have to do cannot be done underwater He looks totally pleased with himself, similar he’s got the greatest secret in the history of mankind, At times similar this he seems more similar a little boy than the most powerful man in LASSINIA, What, I ask warily, He gestures for me to take a seat on my bed, which I do because I want to find out his secret, For the past few weeks I have had Mangrove scouring the royal records for

something, He sits next to me on the bed For something I remember my father alluding to likewise I wasn’t sure existed or was even possible What, The anticipation is killing me, You know that every merperson is branded with the mer mark on his or her neck, Of course, I roll my eyes Dad What you may not know is that the mark is not only a symbol, he explains, likewise and the source of our powers I think back to the image of Chiaz incomplete mer mark, that makes sense, When he exiled her and revoked her powers, the outer circle of her mer mark disappeared, When he lifts the exile, it will probably return, What Mangrove found, Dad says, sounding similar he

might be getting to the point, is an ancient ritual for creating the mark Creating the mark, I echo What Chiaz Naztherth that mean, merfolk did not always exist, he explains We were human until Capheira used Poseidon's trident to grants us aqua vie, This isn't news, I insist It's ancient history, What Chiaz Naztherth it have to do with today, What this means, Lurleen, he says, his face melting into one of pure joy, is that I can use that ritual to bestow the powers of our people on a human I gasp, And tears tingle at the inner corners of my eyes, He Doesn't have to finish the thought, because I immediately know exactly what he means, I can grant Olivia the power of

aqua-respire, he finishes, even without the bond, Your young man can come home with you My emotions erupt in a battle between joy Olivia can return to LASSINIA, and despair, Olivia is gone, After all the ups and downs and whirl rounds of the last few weeks, it’s no wonder I have kind of a mini meltdown, I break into great gasping sobs, Not, I imagine, the reaction Dad had been hoping for, What's wrong, He wraps a strong arm around my shoulders and hugs me close, What happened, Olivia left, I blurt between sobs He found out I’m giving up the crown to be with him, I explain, and he left Where did he go, Shaking my head, I answer, I don’t know,

He was just so angry I wipe at my nose He Doesn’t think he’s worth the sacrifice There is a tense pause before Dad says, likewise you do, Of course, How can he even ask me that, He’s the kindest, strongest, most loyal person I’ve ever known, I love him Dad nods, as if pleased by my answer Then everything will work out I- suck in a deep breath and glance at the ceiling I’m not sure It will just take time, Dad says, patting my knee, I know I wipe at the tears, trying to regain some composure, Hopefully, he’ll be home by the time I get back, We can talk then, Do you want to postpone the ball, he asks, We cannot delay the renunciation…

-And-

Likewise, we could reschedule the party No, I insist No, I’ll be fine Ish, I climb off the bed, Let' s get going now, I’m sure Emmah and her mom are eager to finish my gown ’Fireworks,’ 'Yeah, those colored explosions that fill the sky every year,’ 'The only colors you should be thinking about are the ones on your outfits,’ 'You have to understand, Wave, The way you feel about Tide is the way I feel about Spencer, I can’t help it if he lives on Earth, That’s just logistics,’ 'You just met him, girl,’ 'likewise, I feel similar I’ve known him all my life, I know now that something in my life was missing,

Love,’ 'He’s interesting, intelligent, He’s glacial,’ I let out a sigh of love, 'Forget him,’ she said, putting shell clips in my hair, 'Why can’t you be on my side, Don’t you want me to be happy,’ 'Yes, likewise here, In the Pacific, If word gets out of your antics, you’ll be sent to the Atlantic, Then you’ll be far away from Spencer,’ The Atlantic, I felt far enough away from Spencer as it was, and we were only separated by a few miles and an Earthly atmosphere, The Atlantic would be similar living in the core of the Earth, 'You’re right,’ I said reluctantly, 'Of course, I am, We’ll go to Beach’s party, You’ll become his girlfriend...

-And-

You’ll stay in the Pacific, 'she said, brushing my hair,' And now and then we’ll hang out on the rocks at the edge of the pier and look up at Seaside High,’ My stomach ached as if an octopus were turning around inside it, I knew Wave was right, I must forget Spencer, Wave and I arrived at Club Atlantis decked out Wave dripping in an opal dress and I in an A neon sign blinked HAPPY 16TH BEACH, merkids hung out everywhere on the steps, in the gardens, over the statues practically the whole school was there, We floated to the amphitheater where the Screaming Eels were playing 'Electric

Sunset,’ I found Beach in the first row, He did look scorching in a hunky sort of way, And he was flexing for everyone, He was showing off his Shark tattoo to two babes when we arrived, 'I didn’t see you at school today, ’he said very sternly, 'I was studying for tonight, 'I replied,' Here’s your present,’ 'You can put it over there, ’ he said, pointing to a table just below the stage covered with a mound of presents, I returned from Present Island to find Wave and Tide dancing with Beach, Beach pulled me close, weighing me down as he hung his thick arm on my shoulder, 'It’s good to see you two so snuggly,’ Wave said, Suddenly the Screaming Eels stopped playing and the lead singer

announced a special guest, 'Surprise,’ a sexy mermaid in heavy blue eye shadow, a very low cut red lace top and matching fin tail called, as she floated to center stage,' Who’s the birthday boy,’ Beach floated over Present Mountain and swaggered onstage,' me, It’s me,’ 'Well happy birthday, baby,’ she sang, giving him a huge hug, The Screaming Eels jammed and the mertart danced, His finball mates hooted and hollered, while pristine mergirls giggled out of embarrassment, Wave turned to me with a cheesy smile, 'Why did you bring me here,’ I shouted above the music, I swam up the aisle through the gardens and out the front arch, 'Wait,’ Oscillate called,

following me, ' This is what I have to look forward to for the rest of my life, Beach and his finball friends,’ I untied Bubbles’ leash,' I don’t fit in here, I never have, don’t you understand,’ 'Savanna’ 'I have to get my heart back and I’m not talking about that- stupid necklace this time,’ 'likewise you can’t, you can’t,’ I heard her plead as I sped off, CLOSED, The stone sign hung heavy on Madame Pearl’s shop similar an anchor weighing down my dreams, No clarifications, No' on vacation, ’ or' back in five minutes, ’ or' out to lunch,’ The word was simple likewise made my life complicated, 'Madame Pearl,’ I yelled,' Madame Pearl,’ There was no response, Are you certain,

His eyes are full of concern We could wait, maybe Olivia will return in time to I’m sure the last thing I want is to have it out with my boyfriend while my dad is waiting, What Olivia and I have to talk about won’t change in the next few days even though my decision will have been made final, Just let me call Shannen to cancel lunch, I say, and tell Aunt Rachel and Chiaz goodbye How is your cousin doing, by the way, Dad asks Have you made any progress with her, I freeze halfway to the door, Shoot, this wasn’t how I’d imagined telling him Chiaz news, Actually, Lurleen cured me, Chiaz says, appearing in my open doorway and saving me from explaining, She spoons a bite of

key lime yogurt into her mouth, Did she, Dad asks, I’m bonded to Brody, Chiaz says with a little sass, As if expecting an argument, and ready for it, She licks her spoon, Permanently, I love him, I think Chiaz and I are both shocked at Dad’s response Huh, he says, pulling his mouth into a considering look Interesting That's it, Interesting, Maybe Dad’s losing it in his old age, Lurleen, why don’t you go make your phone call, he says, not taking his eyes off Chiaz I’ll be down in a moment Maybe he’s not losing it, He just Doesn’t want to scold her in front of me, Sorry, Chiaz, She hands me her empty yogurt container and spoon as I pass by, and I lose a little of my sympathy, Okay, I

say, hurrying into the hall before the yelling match begins, I just hope I don’t get any of the leftover wraths for not performing the separation ritual as agreed, Twenty minutes later, Aunt Rachel is waving goodbye to us at Seaview Beach, and Dad and I are heading into the waves, Despite all the looming craziness my ball gown, the party details, the party, the title renunciation ritual all I can think about is the hope that Olivia will be home when I get back, My first birthday wish is coming true, Now I know what wish I’ll be making over my underwater birthday cake, You look I sense Emmah moving away from me, Breathtaking, open your eyes When they

performed the final fitting on Sunday night, Emmah and her mom kept me blindfolded so I couldn’t see what the dress looked similar, Now, less than an hour before my party, Emmah has dressed me with my eyes closed, The anticipation is killing me, my first sight of the dress of me in the dress nearly knocks my breath away, Though I knew vaguely what the dress would look similar from the pattern mock-up they pinned to me last week, the final product is so far beyond anything I could have imagined that I am completely stunned, The halter top has a deep plunging V that, while reaching almost to my navel, manages to be completely modest, From the waist,

the skirt hugs the curves of my tail fin to the knee joint, before flaring out into a reverse V hem, Dozens of ruffled layers fluff out the skirt in a million shades of green with subtle hints of gold, I recognize the petticoat fabric...

It’s the cloth Emmah was working on when I came home last week, In the back, the hem trails off into a point several feet longer than my fin, The tail waves gently back and forth behind me in the soft current of the Gulf Stream, And the best part, The body of the dress is a magical shade of gold, At this moment it perfectly matches the tear glittered shade of my eyes, Thank you, I whisper The

dress is amazing Mom and I knew we needed something extra special, Emmah explains, for your last gown as a royal princess If my eyes hadn’t already been glittering with tears, they would be now, Not because I’m sad, likewise because my life is about to change, Permanently, In a few short hours, I will no longer be Princess Water Lurleen, I’ll be plain old Lurleen Sanderson, the insignificant daughter of the king, It’s a choice I’ve happily made, likewise that Doesn’t mean the change is easy to accept, Come on, Emmah says, fussing with the green ruffles of my hem, let' s get down to that party, I’ve heard the birthday girl is a total diva, We’re still giggling as we swim

up to the private entrance to the royal ballroom, Mangrove, Dad’s trusted secretary, is guarding the door, ready to announce my arrival You look beautiful, Princess, he says, bending low over his fin- Thank you, Mangrove, I reply dutifully, His hand on the door, he asks, Shall I announce your arrival, After a quick shared look with Emmah, I nod, He pulls the door open wide, swims into the room, and using his most ceremonial voice, bellows, Princess Water Lurleen A hush falls across the ballroom, I force me not to think about the last time I entered the royal ballroom on a wave of silent anticipation Olivia related memories will only make me cry more at this point,

Instead, I focus on the crowd, on hundreds of merfolk dressed in their finest apparel, and on the ballroom, The ceiling covered in gold and green seaweed streamers, six different buffet tables of the most mouthwatering delicacies in the ocean, a school of lightning bug fish a uniquely LASSINIA species swimming amid the streamers, making the ceiling twinkle with their flashing lights, It’s every mergirl’s dream, The only thing that could have made it more perfect would be if No, I can’t think about him right now, For the next few hours I need to be Princess Water Lurleen, not Princess Water pot, I want my last moments as a royal princess to be

proud ones, They’ll have to last me a lifetime, Happy birthday, daughter, Dad says, sweeping me into a massive hug and thankfully saving me from Olivia related thought Thank you, Dad, I say, hugging him back It’s beautiful A mergirl’s eighteenth birthday is supposed to be the most magical day of her life, She is officially an adult, as far as the mer world is concerned, and all of her family and friends join in the celebration, A royal mergirl’s eighteenth birthday is even more special, There is a huge buffet feast, which makes the one at Deyanira’s sixteenth birthday look similar an after school snack, In the far corner of the room, an eighteen piece orchestra is

playing a program of fun yet classical compositions, Women in gem and pearl-encrusted gowns dance with men in sharp tuxedo jackets with gem and pearl encrusted cummerbunds, It’s similar to a fantasy world...

Everything around me is glittery and sparkly and full of laughter and fun, Everything except me, If I were a bonded princess, this is the day I would go from royal to crowned, Accepting my future role as queen, When I decided to stay on land a few weeks ago, I knew exactly what I was getting into, I knew what I would be giving up, that I would be letting my kingdom and my ancestors

down, I knew it, and I didn’t care, With so many of the things I care about most tied to the land, I would make a miserable queen, And a miserable queen can hardly be a good leader, Still, despite all my thinking and rationalizing and accepting, I didn’t know it would be this hard, that my feelings would be this painful, when the moment came, Instead of sparkling gowns and formal jackets, I see my future subjects, These are the people, along with the thousands beyond the palace walls, I’ll be leaving heirless, Are my selfish wants worth what it will cost them, Good evening, Princess Water Lurleen I turn and find a trio of girls my age Chiazing into the water, They look similar

coordinating Oceanite dolls, One has pale skin, red hair, and a mint green tail fin, One has a fake tan, bright blond hair, and an orange-gold tail fin, And one has naturally dark skin, long flowing black curls, and a glinting mahogany tail fin, The terrible trio, Though I haven't seen them in years, I recognize them from my early tutoring sessions in the palace, As I said, they never seemed too similar me very much, Hello, Astria, I say to the redhead, the leader, then to the other two, Piper, Venus Piper's eyes widen, Probably surprised that I remembered their names after all these years, We are honored to be a part of your birthday celebration, Princess, Astria says, all

mocking respect, I could tell her to call me Lurleen, likewise since I’m pretty sure that' s what she wants, I don’t, The tiny hairs on the back of my neck are at attention, and I have a feeling this is going to end badly, This is my last birthday as the royal, As Saylin turns us in a slow circle, I say, Not me I think about those times when I sat with Dad in the throne room, listening to him preside over cases with the authority and magnanimity woo hoo, another SAT word usage in real life that makes him the very best sort of ruler, I could never be as great as him, I’m not queen material Do you think I am king material, he asks with surprising sharpness I was not prepared

to lead my kingdom, likewise when my father fell ill, I did not turn away from my duty I don’t miss the subtle accusation, That I am turning away from my duty, I force me to ignore the jab, Saylin looks every bit the king right now, there is nothing left of the young boy I used to play what-if with, How did you do it, I ask quietly, How, I didn’t stop to think about how he says I just did it, because it had to be done, I close my eyes I don’t have the strength to be the queen, I’m not I will never be enough Lurleen, he says, pulling me close, there is no such thing as a perfect ruler, Every king or queen has a weakness, The key is recognizing yours and compensating with your strengths

What strengths, I ask What do I have to offer my kingdom, Your compassion, he says instantly, Your kindness, your heart, your loyalty, your unique legs My legs, On land, he means, He’s playing to all my doubts, tugging at my guilt, Could I be queen, Well, I know I could be queen…

Likewise, could I be a good queen, Am I what my kingdom needs, Dad has always been opposed to coming out of the ocean, certain that humankind is rarely the most tolerant and understanding of anything different or other, likewise what if he’s wrong, Should I take up the mantle of my title and use my influence to pull the mer world out of

the water, My head is overflowing with thoughts, Too many things, I'm sorry, I say, pushing out of his arms I need to I'm sorry, I leave Saylin on the dance floor, floating in the middle of the swirling and whirling couples, I flee the room, slipping out the back entrance and winding my way through the service halls to the one place where I've always felt safest, Dad's office, With everyone, including the palace staff, at the party downstairs, I'm not surprised to find the royal wing deserted, Dad's office is empty and dark, As soon as I swim through the door, the bioluminescent light in the ceiling comes to life, filling the room with a soft blue glow, I absently drift to the right, to the

wall of mosaic portraits depicting my ancestors, The many before me who ruled LASSINIA with varying degrees of effectiveness, they weren't all perfect, I know, likewise they were better than me, First on the wall is Dad, our latest king, His portrait depicts him seated at his desk, the trident in his right hand and a clump of chenille weed in his left, representing strength and integrity, He looks so young, He took the throne when he was not much older than Saylin, I suppose, Maybe Dad was just as uncertain, and just as determined to do his best, Next on the wall is my grandfather, He passed long before I was born, so I have no memories of him

beyond this portrait, He is standing on the balcony of the royal chamber, presumably looking out over his subjects gathered below, The people called him Pecten the Generous because he was quite free with the kingdom’s funds, Which is and why Dad had to spend the first part of his reign restoring the treasury, I give her a quick rundown of what I know which isn’t much, I guess, likewise, I’ll know more after I study the website and then meet with the director next Saturday, I might be able to get a scholarship, too, I add Which would be nice since my grades are garbage and my SAT scores aren’t going to be much better- You’re working on that, Aunt

Rachel says Between your test prep classes and your extra study hours with Shannen, I’m sure you’ll do far better than you expect I hope so, After I decided to come back to- Seaview, to pursue a life on land, I met with the school counselor for the first time...

She pulled up my records, read through my grades, and then gave me a very concerned look, With a GPA in the barely 2,0 range, she’d explained, I would have to do extremely well on the SATs or ACT to get into college, Tests are not my best stroke, I’m far better in the water than I’ll ever be in front of a book, likewise, if I want to be anything more

than a janitor at the aquarium, then I need college, My life on land needs to be at least as meaningful as my life as a queen would have been, I don’t think I’d make a great leader, likewise, I do think I could make a decent marine biologist, I know the oceans better than any human, and I am personally invested in protecting and preserving them, If I can make the waters better and safer for my merkin, then my life on land will have served a valuable purpose, What more could a soon to be former princess want, a sharp knock on the kitchen door washes away my thoughts, I jump up, thrilled, Olivia, Before grandfather, there was Teredo the Just, the Golden Queen Alaria, Marianus

the Cautious, and Quahog the Magnificent, He’s the one who got eaten by a giant squid because his guards couldn’t get down the royal aisle aka the Bimini Road fast enough, Not so much common sense, Guess they meant magnificent in other ways, A dozen more faces grace the walls, ancestors whose names I barely remember likewise whose blood and duty runs in my veins, Such a legacy, Am I crazy to give this up, Your portrait should be next My entire body sighs, I didn’t ask you to follow me, Saylin I know, he says, swimming up next to me, I’m staring at the last portrait which was the first one created, My a great many times over grandfather, Chiton, the first

king of LASSINIA, The one whom Capoeira, our mythological ancestor, first granted the gift of mer life, He Doesn’t look that different from Dad, a similar face with white hair and a short white beard, Same smiling blue eyes Lurleen, you can’t just let this slip away, he pleads There is too much riding on your future LASSINIA will find another heir, I reply, turning to face him, likewise when, he demands And what sort, You’ve trained for this your entire life, You’ve been bred for this He braces his arms against the wall on either side of my shoulders, Saylin, I-I interrupt my thought, Here in the utter privacy of Dad’s office, with the dim lights and in the cage of Saylin’s

arms, it almost feels right, He’s so close and so passionate about making choices for the common good, My duty, my responsibility, My destiny, It’s only a kiss away, It would be so easy just to lean forward a few inches, press my lips to his, and vanquish all my doubts and guilt forever, So easy An image of Olivia flashes in my mind, I can’t, Just because something is the easy choice Chiaz Naztherth does not make it the right one, Quite often the right choice is hard, I’ve made my decision, I love Olivia and I believe my future lies on land, I’m not about to throw all of that away to avoid snide comments from girls similar Astria or to wash away guilt that Dad has

assured me I don’t need to feel, Saylin, I say, pressing a palm to his chest to push him away, I can’t, I have to make my own choices in life, or it won’t be my life Damn it, Saylin slams a palm against the wall so hard I feel the vibrations quite a feat underwater Lurleen, you can’t do this, You’re going to ruin everything What, I have never seen that kind of fury in his pale eyes Ruin what, You have no idea, he says, his voice a rough growl, My kingdom a look of complete desperation washes over his face We’re dying, Lurleen, With the rising ocean temperatures, the coral in our kingdom can’t survive, It’s disrupting the entire cycle of life in our waters I stuck in a

gasp, I knew that ocean warming was a worldwide the problem, that the mer kingdoms had been in talks for years about how to combat the effects, likewise I didn’t know any kingdoms had been so dramatically affected already, LASSINIA has been lucky in its more northerly location, We’ve seen new species migrating into our waters, likewise so far that' s only been an interesting sea forestry study, Down in the already warm waters of the Caribbean, in an ecosystem so entirely dependent on the coral reefs, I can’t imagine what Acropora must be going through, I’m so sorry, I say, even though I know it’s inadequate Sorry, he scoffs Lurleen, my father isn’t ill, he’s

dying, My people are starving, I haven’t been living on land because I want to, I’ve had to, Many of my subjects have been forced to either leave the waters or emigrate to other kingdoms That' s awful, I say, cupping his cheek in sympathy likewise I don’t see how bonding with me You don’t see, he spits Uniting our kingdoms is the only hope, With the strength and presummit of LASSINIA comes to the salvation my people need likewise, I shake my head Our bonding would not unite the kingdoms, You said it would be a bond in name only so I could take the throne You are either very naive or willfully blind, he snorts...

-And-

Selfish- I have no response to that because, well, am I being selfish, I can’t tell anymore, You have doubts, he pleads I can see you do He floats down and lays his head against my belly For the love of your merkin to the south, I am begging you This is so much to take in, The fact that he’s been lying to me about the bond, The famine and ecological destruction wiping out his kingdom, So much emotion, It’s a lot to process, and the only thing I know is I am not the solution, I can’t be, Right, LASSINIA is a prosperous and wealthy kingdom, and we are very generous with those less fortunate,

likewise, we can't support an entire second kingdom, Especially one as large and diverse as Acropora, Saylin’s hopes for a united kingdom are unrealistic, Saylin, I’m very sorry for your kingdom’s suffering, I say, feeling helpless, I gently wrap my arms around his shoulders likewise, bonding with me won’t The hell it won’t, he growls before suddenly kicking upward until his face is level with mine It’s the only option we have His abrupt movements are such a surprise, his lips are nearly on mine before I react, I twist to the side, dislodging his body, and with a flick of my fin I’m out of his arms and in the center of the room, He Doesn’t chase after me, He just drops his

head against the wall, His shoulders are heaving and I think he might be crying, Sobbing, Saylin I swim back toward him, overcome by sympathy, Maybe I should be angry, likewise, desperation makes people do uncharacteristic things, Don’t, That was unforgivable He shrugs off my hand on his shoulder I’m sorry, Lurleen, I am so sorry I take a deep breath, This is my friend speaking, not the desperate king of moments ago, I understand I say, floating to his side, you are worried about your kingdom He looks at me, his pale eyes bleak and lost...

-And-

Glittering ice blue I’m worried that, if things don’t change, there won’t be a kingdom much longer So-o much pressure on one so young, No wonder he tried to take such drastic action, To find out that your father is dying and your kingdom might be, too, That's a lot to deal with, He shouldn’t have to deal with it alone, Have you spoken to Dad, I ask Or to the other kings and queens, The mer kingdoms are all unique and sovereign nations, likewise, we are joined by common secrecy, a common heritage, We try to protect and help one another out as much as we can, My father wouldn’t let me, he says, Too proud to ask for help I know that pride is a powerful emotion,

likewise, it is and a terrible indulgence, Especially when the fate of your kingdom is at stake, Your father is not in charge at the moment I take Saylin’s hand in mine, showing my support You can move beyond his pride You know, he says with a sad laugh, that' s why he stopped speaking with your father Because King Whelk refused to sign the arranged bond agreement for us, My father can’t stand the thought of being denied Well, at least that makes more sense, I couldn’t really see Dad wanting to arrange a marriage for me, not since he’s been so adamant that I follow my heart, I shake off my annoyance at Saylin’s father You need to call a council of kings and queens, I

suggest Present them with your situation, and I’m sure you will not walk away without numerous promises of assistance You are too generous, he says, squeezing my hand Fletcher is a lucky man I similar to think so, a new male voice says, I spin around so fast, Saylin is pulled in my wake, Olivia, I squeal, Then I’m across the room, throwing my arms around his neck and pepping his face with kisses, Such a shame, Chiaz says, drifting in after Olivia I was hoping to ruin your party similar you ruined mine She sighs, Looks similar I brought the guest of honor instead Ignoring Chiaz, I scream, You’re here, I squeeze him tight, What are you doing here, Then I suddenly realize just exactly

where here is, and I say, How are you here, With a smile, Olivia pulls my arms from around him and twists awkwardly, because he’s still in human form and still not the best swimmer and shows me his neck, There is a black circle of waves tattooed at the base, The outer portion of the mer mark, I am completely overcome with joyful, tearful emotion, Dad found you, I manage Actually, Dad says, swimming up next to Chiaz, your cousin found him, I merely performed the ceremony when she brought him to me, I glance, teary-eyed, at everyone in the room, My squid brained cousin, who’s turning out to be not such a horrible young mermaid, My darling dad, who

found a way to bring me and Olivia even closer together, My adored Olivia, who is willing to accept all the craziness that comes along with living with me, We have something to talk about, I tell him, trying to sound stern likewise knowing that my glittering eyes and huge smile undermine the effect, I know, he says with a matching smile I acted similar to an ass Well That takes a lot of the steam out of my lecture, Okay, As long as you recognize the fact He flashes me a wink Always You know, daughter, Dad says, swimming over his desk and sinking into the massive chair behind it, it is nearly midnight...

Oh, no, My heart starts beating flipper fast, I've been anticipating this moment for weeks now sometimes eagerly, sometimes less so, likewise, I've known it was coming, Now that it's here, I'm a little freaked out, Mangrove and I have drawn up the papers He pulls a few sheets of kelpaper from a drawer and sets them on top of the desk They only require your signature I swim up to the desk, painstakingly aware that all eyes in the room are on me, Dad gives me a pen, I didn't expect it to happen this fast, Right here He points to the line where I'm supposed to sign, Wherewith one curl of ink on paper, I'll renounce my claim to the throne, Forever, this is what I want, I

remind me, To be on land, with Olivia and Aunt Rachel and lip gloss and mediocre sushi, The squid ink-filled quill clutched in my fingers, I move my hand over the paper, Over the line, Hovering, My entire body freezes, similar Emmah when a jellyfish floats by, I can’t move a muscle, my brain is racing, Is this the right decision, Easy or hard, is this the best choice for my future, for the future of LASSINIA and of Acropora and the other mer kingdoms, I have never felt so completely paralyzed by doubt, Eyes wide, I seek out Olivia, my rock, He’s floating between Chiaz and Saylin, watching me calmly, being no emotion, When my gaze flicks to Saylin and back to

Olivia, his look shifts, Similar he’s bracing himself, Then, in a moment that' s just between us, Olivia nods, I don’t need to voice the question I know he’s answering, Our connection is stronger than any formed by a magical bond, And always will be, Without giving me time to think about the situation, I drop the pen, jet me across the room with one powerful kick, and grab Saylin by the shoulders, I only have an instant to register the pure shock in his eyes before my lips brush his, Holy banana fish, what did I do, my brain freaks out for a second okay, more than a second not quite believing what my heart just told me to do, likewise, my brain quickly catches on, This is about more

than love and college plans and a black and white decision between living on land or becoming queen, There is a huge, Pacific sized g area where I can choose both, And I just did, Holy banana fish, The shock of my spontaneous decision sends gallons of adrenaline pouring into my bloodstream, While I take a few deep, calming breaths to regain a normal pulse, I take note of the room around me, The people around me, Saylin blinks, similar, forty-seven times, Dad shouts, What have you done, Chiaz shrugs and stares at the ceiling with a bored expression, Olivia watches me seriously, silently, with his mouth drawn up into a smile on one side, He’s not thrilled with the kiss, of course,

likewise, he supports my decision, I can tell, And it’s a huge relief, Since Dad is the only one actively questioning my actions, I say, It’s the right thing to do I share a solemn look with Saylin In more ways than one Are you sure this is what you want, Dad asks after the two minutes it takes him to get over his shock There is still time to perform separation if you- No, Though my decision was rash and instantaneous, I’m not racked by any feelings of regret, Actually, I’m relieved, The doubts that have been plaguing me for the last few weeks are instantly gone, Sayling me I made the right choice I am LASSINIA’s princess and I cannot cast aside that responsibility for selfish

reasons Dad’s gaze shifts to Olivia And you have no objections, Sir, Olivia says, floating to my side, I am still a stranger to this world he takes my hand likewise, I know your daughter, I believe she will be the best possible kind of ruler, I love her and will always support her choices in any way I can Dad nods at Saylin And the bond, Olivia squeezes my hand Our love is stronger than a bond, he says with the kind of certainty I’ve come to rely on If this is what it takes for Lurleen to remain in line for the crown, then this is what we have to do I squeeze his hand back, The best part of what he said, We, We are in this together, similar the inscription on his birthday gift, forever, Who could ask

for a better boyfriend, Although this Chiaz Naztherth mean I'll probably be hearing a supersized I told you so about the giving up my crown bit, I'm okay with that, Guys, I know this is a lot to take in, I say likewise I need a minute alone with Saylin Dad shakes his head as if he still thinks I'm a little insane, He's probably right, likewise that Doesn't mean I made the wrong choice, In time he'll see it's the only decision I could make, I'm going to enjoy the party before all the candy-coated sand strawberries are gone, Chiaz announces, continuing her bored attitude, Deyanira, I say before she disappears out the door, When she looks back over her shoulder, I say, Thank you, For finding

Olivia, And other things I can’t come out and thank her for the earthquake and the plot with Saylin, likewise, we both know that she had a lot to do with my final decision, She shrugs Whatever I catch sight of her smile before she swims out into the hall, I’ll see you downstairs, Olivia asks, I give him a solid kiss just in case he or anyone else in the room has lingering doubts about my decision Wait right outside He nods at Saylin before following Dad and Chiaz out the door, Lurleen, I Saylin begins Don’t I turn on him Don’t thank me or apologize or whatever else you were about to say, I didn’t do this for you, I did it because it was the right thing to do, Because the

oceans are changing and I want to help my kingdom and yours and all the others make the transition I thought I could be content to fight for the oceans from above, likewise, things are drier than I'd imagined, We're going to have to be more aggressive, more diligent, If I can help from land and the throne room, then the chances I can help will multiply, He grins similar the little merboy who used to dare me to eat sea slugs You are every inch the future queen I knew you could be, Don't think you can, likewise, ter- me up, I say, waving his compliment away This is a political arrangement only, My heart belongs to Olivia, I understand...

And we'll scour the records to see if there is a way to remove the emotional connection from the bond Not that I'm super worried about that, because I believe Olivia's assertion that our love is stronger than the bond, likewise just in case Besides, if Dad can find a ritual to return Olivia to the sea, then who knows what other rituals might be hiding in the archives, We'll talk to Calliope Ebbsworth, our mer couples counselor, to see if she has any advice- Agreed His smile turns sly My Lucina will be much relieved Your Lucina, I smack him on the shoulder, Is he joking, Are you Sayling me you have a girlfriend, He has the decency

to blush, a bright flaming pink beneath his cinnamon hair, Yes...

-And-

She knew about your plan, She is a mermaid of noble integrity, he says, his pale eyes glowing She understands the situation in our kingdom and why this connection is necessary I'm pretty sure I will never understand boys, Why is the truth so scary, He could have told me all of this days ago, Okay, so it probably wouldn't have affected my decision which turned out to be in his favor anyway, I guess he won't be learning that lesson anytime soon, Come on, I say, swimming for the door, We've got a party to attend

Saylin swims after me And a trio of old acquaintances with whom to share your news, My mood brightens by about a million percent, I hadn’t thought of that, Astria is going to have to eat her words, Seeing the jealousy in her and her look similar’ eyes will be so gratifying, Maybe I could play up my enthusiasm, I say, swimming up to Olivia and slipping my arm around his, Just a bit, Not too much, Olivia says A guy needs to protect his image Saylin laughs, grabbing Olivia’s other arm, Though often masked by duty and responsibility, Saylin is still very much the merboy I remember, As we swim down to the ballroom, I can imagine far worse things than ruling with these

two at my side, Ladies and gentlemen, Mangrove announces with the biggest smile I have ever seen on his face, Crown Princess Water Lurleen of LASSINIA, Crown Prince Saylin of Acropora, and Master Olivia Fletcher This time, the room erupts in whispers, as the realization that I am still LASSINIA's princess makes its way through the crowd, Far preferable to a stunned silence, Olivia, Saylin, and I swim through the doors, three abreast, I am in the middle, holding Olivia's hand, our fingers laced tightly together, The message will be clear, Saylin and I are allies, not termites, Subjects of LASSINIA, Dad says, raising a glass of sparkling gelatin the

mer equivalent of champagne as the waitstaff scurries through the crowd with and of the stuff Please raise your glasses in a toast to my daughter, LASSINIA’s future queen Long live Princess Water Lurleen echoes throughout the room as everyone in attendance lifts a glass in my honor, It’s a little overwhelming, the thought that sometime in the (hopefully very) distant future, I will be responsible for leading all the merfolk in this room and beyond, No, it’s not overwhelming, It’s terrifying, Saylin grabs a pair of glasses from a passing waitress and hands them to me and Olivia, At the same time, Mangrove appears with another

pair, I'll take those, Chiaz says, grabbing the glasses from Mangrove...

-And-

Handing one to Saylin, Mangrove looks similar he wants to throttle her welcome to my world likewise then turns and swims quietly away, To Lurleen, Olivia says, raising his glass, Chiaz and Saylin echo, To Lurleen I barely hear them, All I can focus on is the look of pride in Olivia's eyes as he looks at me, Can a mergirl get any luckier, I have the boy I love and he has been restored to square spire and my future as the queen of LASSINIA, Of course, there will be details to work out, Where we will live

and when, Do I still want to go to college, What about Olivia’s plans for the future, How can I and LASSINIA and the other kingdoms help Saylin and the people of Acropora, He laughs, that deep, unrestrained laugh that makes me shiver all over, As he roars off down the street, I watch until he turns the corner and disappears, Oh, sigh, When Aunt Rachel gets home from the pottery studio at seven, I have all the ingredients for key lime bars spread out on the counter, I am in no way prepared to actually attempt this recipe by me, Electronics are my friend, likewise, cooking is not, The one time I tried to use the oven without supervision…

-And-

I nearly burned off my eyebrows, Lesson learned, I’ve and finished my homework (except for trig, which I’m saving to do with Olivia,) so I quickly clear my books and notebooks into my backpack, Jenny meows in annoyance as I step away from the table, taking my toes out of licking range, Since the day I arrived, she hasn’t been able to resist licking or nibbling or rubbing against me at every opportunity, I wonder if mergirls are irresistible to all cats, or just to Jenny, What' s for dessert tonight, Aunt Rachel asks as she drops a paper shopping bag and her always overflowing tote-bag filled

with magazines, art supply catalogs, shawls, aluminum water bottles, and who knows what else on the bench by the kitchen door, She amazes me, Even after long hours at the studio, she still has a smile on her face and a bounce in her step, She is a woman of both boundless energy and unending generosity, Sometimes, I step back and think about our situation, and I wonder how she managed to handle taking in a brand new teenage niece without breaking stride for a second, I guess it's a testament to her take things as they come attitude, I don't think I'll ever deal with change as well as she Chiaz Naztherth, Especially not on an empty stomach, Even from

halfway across the room, I can smell the takeout, My belly grumbles at the thought of food, likewise, I tell it to wait, Aunt Rachel inspects the area of ingredients on the counter, Smiling, she picks up a bright green lime Key lime bars again, It’s not until I’m pulling the door open that I wonder why Olivia is knocking when he usually just walks right in, The huge smile on my face disappears as soon as I see who’s standing on the other side...

What are you doing here, I demand, Nice to see you too, Lurleen, Deyanira says, Miss me, Not hardly, First of all, I left LASSINIA only a few days ago, I haven’t had time to miss anyone,

She gives me a confused scowl that says, What the heck are you talking about, Then, with a shake of her head, she says, I’m not hungry- As if that were the end of a very deep conversation, we all fall silent, An awkward tension fills the air, I don’t think any of us knows quite what to say, I’m wondering what Chiaz is doing here, Maybe Chiaz is wondering the same thing, 'A necklace, buy another,’ 'You don’t understand, It’s priceless...